



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR YOUTH EDUCATION 2020-2024

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APPENDICES

I. INTRODUCTION: PLAN PURPOSE AND USE

Curry Watersheds Partnership adopted this strategic plan for its popular youth education program on _____ 2020.

For the past fifteen years, teachers in every Curry County school district have enthusiastically engaged with their students in Partnership staff-led classroom and field science activities, with the support of school principals and superintendents. Activities have been designed consistent with relevant state policies, e.g., to promote learning modes recommended by Oregon's Next Generation Science Standards.

Now, as state educational policy increasingly recognizes the importance of elementary and middle school science, experiential learning, and development of critical thinking skills, Curry educators and Curry Watersheds Partnership education staff see opportunity to build even more synergistic relationships between Partnership services and other academic work. Starting with the Partnership's expertise in planning and management of field learning experiences, they can work together to maximize educational benefit and connection to larger classroom goals.

This plan serves in part to ensure that Partnership educational services remain consistent with the overarching Partnership mission. It sets guideposts in the form of a mission and vision for educational services, along with a written statement of the fundamental values that have guided and will continue to guide implementation.

The plan also identifies specific goals, objectives and supporting actions to be completed in the next 1-3 years, based on currently-available information.

Adjustments and revisions to planned objectives and actions may become appropriate as additional information and opportunities arise during the life of this plan.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Curry County sits in geographic isolation at the southern end of the Oregon coast, separated from the bustling Interstate 5 corridor by the mountains of the Coast Range. The highly rural county is noted for exceptional natural beauty -- beaches, free-flowing rivers, wetlands, forests -- and also for chronically high levels of unemployment and a suite of social ills triggered by multi-generational poverty. Like most of Oregon's formerly timber-dependent coastal areas, Curry County lost its most important source of employment in the late 1980s. It has yet to recover from that experience.

The Curry Watersheds Partnership is a voluntary relationship that has evolved since the mid-1990s among the Curry Soil and Water Conservation District, two watershed councils, and a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization governed by representatives of the first three entities. Together, the partners' areas of operation encompass all of Curry County.

The Partnership's purpose, very generally, is to strengthen local capacity for effective stewardship of local watershed health, in recognition of watershed health as essential to community well-being. The partnership structure is intended to encourage, coordinate and facilitate cost-effective implementation of various projects and programs focused on sustainability of natural functions, consistent with the partners' shared purposes, so that local communities can thrive. The partners, and the partnership, create a unique and inclusive forum through which residents can better evaluate the health of natural systems, and prioritize and plan for appropriate, effective collaborative action in the community interest.

Generally, the partnership's activities fall into two broad categories: facilitating the gathering, sharing and analysis of factual and scientific information as the basis for decision-making; and selecting and physically implementing on-the-ground ecological restoration projects.

This plan addresses a subset of the first category: the partnership's strategy for helping school-age children develop skills in understanding and drawing inferences from natural science information, as relevant to sustainable watershed functions.

The partnership has been implementing this strategy, with the enthusiastic participation of all three Curry County school districts, since 2004. The scope and nature of services has expanded steadily; the basic model involves Curry Watersheds Partnership staff in delivery of classroom instruction components, with students then embarking on field trips to observe and perform field science activities organized and led by staff, with equipment furnished by Curry Watersheds Partnership.

The Partnership's education services provide students across several grades with multiple, episodic versions of the kinds of learning that the state legislature endorses through its support for Outdoor School (a one-time multi-day experience for one grade). The Partnership emphasizes

hands-on learning outside the classroom and connectivity to the community, taking full advantage of the diversity of nearby natural, restored and actively managed study sites, and the cultural departments of the region's two federally-recognized tribes. Depending on grade and location, students may use scientific instruments to take field measurements, record observations, and/or discuss their conclusions based on discovered conditions and background knowledge.

Partnership-provided learning also includes a "foodshed" strand through which students learn in the classroom about food systems at multiple scales, and consider the relationship of food production and distribution to watershed functions. Associated field trips take students to local sheep and produce farms and to the Port of Port Orford (dedicated to nearshore commercial fishing). One school makes its kitchen available for an after-school cooking class. Curry Watersheds Partnership staff have also helped schools create or secure assistance for management of school gardens.

Administrators in all Curry County elementary and middle schools are deeply appreciative of this educational enhancement: as an enthused 7th grade science teacher interviewed for this project noted, area students otherwise have no guaranteed exposure to scientific concepts until they enter middle school. Similarly, several teachers in lower grades noted that they welcomed Curry Watersheds Partnership offerings because they themselves felt underprepared to teach science. Providing field learning opportunities on such a regular basis is beyond Curry schools' capacity; Curry Watersheds Partnership's expertise, capacity for efficient field trip planning and management, and provision of scientific instruments, are highly valued. All educators interviewed for this project reported that students are noticeably energized and more engaged by the field trip experience, although teachers do not feel fully prepared to capitalize on that enthusiasm. As a final benefit, in a community with no public transportation, students gain knowledge of places, conditions, and causal relationships within their communities of which they were previously unaware.

Curry Watersheds Partnership's dedicated education staff have built strong, positive relationships and high credibility with educators throughout the county, and in the past few years local, state and federal education policy has reinforced demand for precisely the kinds of hands-on science learning and critical thinking that Curry Watersheds Partnership provides.

At the same time, the sheer diversity of the Partnership's current offerings, and classroom-by-classroom customizations have produced unsustainable workloads. Additionally, the Partnership has recognized that labels such as "watershed" and "foodshed" do not fully convey the program's core purpose of providing active learning in application of fundamental natural science principles.

All involved seem eager to achieve greater educational impact through collaboration. Partnership staff and area teachers would welcome the opportunity to work together to help students prepare for or extend learning triggered by a Curry Watersheds Partnership field trip. To that end, Curry Watersheds Partnership will initiate an inclusive education collaborative

structure with teachers for creation and periodic re-assessment of grade-specific guidelines and materials.

The resulting clearer articulation of youth education program purpose and educational effectiveness of services will also greatly assist with financial sustainability. The Partnership's youth education activities can be communicated more succinctly and compellingly, in clear relationship to community values and needs.

Curry Watersheds Partnership's youth education program is designed to develop Curry residents' capacity to plan for and protect natural systems, while optimizing associated opportunities for additional learning. The collaboration it is preparing to undertake may prove a useful model for new nonprofit-school relationships in other rural communities.

Accordingly, Curry Watersheds Partnership has adopted the following vision, mission and goals for its education program:

EDUCATION PROGRAM MISSION:

To provide hands-on youth education in outdoor settings, promoting curiosity, critical thinking, and community connections.

EDUCATION PROGRAM VISION:

Those we serve are equipped to recognize and participate effectively in decisions that impacts dynamic relationships connecting ecosystem, community, and individual health.

EDUCATION PROGRAM GOALS:

Goal 1: Support schools' achievement of state and national educational goals relevant to Curry Watersheds Partnership mission.

Goal 2: Structure education program to enhance cumulative learning and encourage broad skill development.

Goal 3: Establish foundation for program sustainability and growth.

III. PLANNING CONTEXT

A. Geographic Context:

1. Topography: Curry County, in the extreme south west corner of Oregon, includes 1,272,000 acres and roughly 85 miles of coastline. Its western edge paralleling the ocean is fairly flat, rising inland to rolling hills and eventually a low mountain range running north to south, which prevents direct access eastward from the county to Interstate Highway 5.

2. Waterways: Curry County includes nine rivers: New River, and the Sixes, Elk, Rogue, Illinois, Pistol, Chetco, Wynchuck, and North Fork Smith. All of these rivers originate in the heavily forested mountains to the east and flow westward to the ocean. In most cases, the lower reaches of the rivers are bordered by large fields used for grazing sheep and cattle. All of these rivers are free flowing. Segments of each of the last five are designated as National Wild and Scenic River areas.

3. Land uses: Approximately 88% of the county is forested and managed for timber production by either the government (66% ownership) or private landowners (22%).

The remaining, less timber-intensive area – approximately 12% of land in the county – lies in a narrow band stretching north to south along the coastline. Curry County's three cities and a smaller rural center are located along that coastal strip, a mile or less inland, with a small rural center, Agness, slightly inland. These urban centers and intensive residential uses cover slightly more than 4% of Curry County.

Less than 7% of all county land, and perhaps as little as 3.3%, is used for agricultural purposes, with all such uses also occurring within the coastal strip. According to the most recent USDA information (which is not precise), Curry County has a total of 197 (privately-owned) farms covering 90,000 acres. The vast majority of those farms (87) raise beef. Most of the others are similarly devoted to raising animals such as sheep, poultry and goats for commercial sale, and to growing crops for animal feed.

Of the total agricultural land in the county, slightly more than 1,000 acres is devoted to growing berries, fruit and vegetables for human consumption. Of that acreage, almost all is dedicated to relatively permanent large-scale commercial plantings, such as cranberry bogs and fruit orchards. A very small subset is used to grow herbaceous annual and perennial vegetables and flowers. (USDA 2017).

B. Demographic Context

1. Population

Curry County's current population of 22,364, has been fairly stable for at least 15 years. Population distribution increases exponentially towards the southern end of the Curry coast: just 1,210 reside in Port

Orford, its northernmost city; almost twice that number(2,404) in the city of Gold Beach, near the middle of the Curry coast; and more than five and half times many (6,784) in Brookings, at the county's southern border.

Additional residences are clustered immediately outside the cities, especially Gold Beach and Brookings, but almost 40% of the county population is classified as "rural," living either on the extensive agricultural lands between those cities, or along the lower stretches of one of the rivers.

Estimates of the population's racial composition vary by source, but generally seem to agree that 86% of the population identifies as white, 7% as Latino, and 3.5% as multiracial. Estimates for other groups show the greatest variability, but suggest that those identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native may exceed 2%; as Asian, 1%; and as African American, less than 1 %.

At least 34% of the total population is more than 65 years old, and another 20% is under 18.

2. Economic indicators

Like most of Oregon's coastal counties, particularly in the south, Curry County suffers from sustained, multigenerational poverty. Curry County's unemployment rate has consistently ranked among the ten highest in Oregon for at least the past twenty years. As of December, 2019, the Curry County unemployment rate was 150% of the state rate (6% v. 4% unemployment). The economic future is not bright: the county sustained 1.5% job loss between 2018 and 2019, and median income for the county is 75% of the state average.

Economic statistics for subsets of the county are difficult to locate due to the small size of these towns, but in general, populations in the northern part of the county are faring far worse than the county average.

The largest sectors for employment are trade, transportation and utilities; private education and health services; and leisure and hospitality. The "trade and transportation" sector includes a very active commercial "live" fishery at the Port of Port Orford; operation of the nearshore fishing fleet of locally-owned boats there support a significant segment of that area's economy.

3. Other factors affecting community success:

As of 2016, 30% of the Curry County population over 25 years old had no high school diploma or GED. An additional 34% in that group had taken one or more college classes, but had not earned an associate's degree. Just over 23.5% of the population has a 4-year degree. (This figure may actually be much lower for parents of K-12 students; in-migrating retirees' higher educational levels may elevate the county-wide average.)

According to a recent study by The Ford Family Foundation, just 6% of Curry County residents are deemed to have a “healthy” diet (5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables daily), as compared to a 20% rate for all of Oregon. Curry County food insecurity, at 14.7%, is less than one percentage point below the highest levels of food insecurity in the state, and 1.8% higher than the state average.

Similar findings were reported in the “Community Food Assessment” for Curry County produced in 2014 by Curry Watersheds Partnership together with Oregon Food Bank and Wild Rivers Coast Alliance, with assistance via AmeriCorps and the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (a summary of recommendations from that report is appended). The report focused primarily on issues limiting residents’ ability to access local produce; access to locally-produced meat was not addressed because it is not feasible under applicable USDA regulations. The assessment noted that access to fresh fruit and vegetables is limited by multiple considerations: home gardening is especially challenging in the windy maritime environment, local farms cannot generate enough business selling to the small local market, and most of the local community cannot afford to pay what these farms would need to charge.

4. Education levels/schools/performance

Curry County school district enrollment parallels population distribution: the northernmost school district, 2CJ, averages 16 students per grade; the mid-coast district, Central Curry, has roughly double that enrollment with an average 33 students per grade; and the southern school district, Brookings-Harbor, has more than seven times 2CJ’s average, with 120 students per grade. The smaller northern school districts have significantly higher percentages of students living in poverty.

Curry County’s 70% high school graduation rate is the 6th worst in the state. It is lower than the rural Oregon average of 71.7%, and appreciably lower than the statewide 77% high school graduation rate.

C. Organizational Context:

1. Partnership Overview:

The “Curry Watersheds Partnership” is a voluntary relationship that has evolved since the mid-1990s among three pre-existing entities: the Curry Soil and Water Conservation District, the Lower Rogue Watershed Council, and the South Coast Watershed Council. It now includes a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization jointly managed by the three partners. A diagram of the entities’ relationships and governance structure is appended.

The Partnership’s purpose is to achieve cost-effective coordinated implementation and administration of projects and programs that advance the interests of all three organizations. Those interests are, generally, to strengthen community capacity for effective stewardship of local watershed health, recognizing watershed health as essential to community well-being.

As explained below, the relationship was initially formed so that the two watershed councils could benefit from the Soil and Water Conservation District's legal capacity to serve as fiscal agent for state grant funding. Over time, the Partnership structure has evolved to a more formal and complex vehicle for voluntary cooperation among the entities. The nonprofit organization created by the partners more recently allows the partnership to apply for grants and implement projects that, while consistent with Soil and Water Conservation District goals, might not fit squarely within the Soil and Water Conservation District's legal mandate, or for which a government entity might not be an eligible recipient.

2. Partner descriptions:

a. Soil and Water Conservation District. The Curry Soil and Water Conservation District is a special district formed in 1953 pursuant to Oregon statute. Its governing board is locally elected to "participate in effectuating" the following legislative policy:

to provide for the conservation of the renewable natural resources of the state and thereby to conserve and develop natural resources, control and prevent soil erosion, control floods, conserve and develop water resources and water quality, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, conserve natural beauty, promote recreational development, promote collaborative conservation efforts to protect and enhance healthy watershed functions, assist in the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency resources, protect the tax base, protect public lands and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are a national phenomenon, originally proposed to the states by the federal government as a mechanism to assure local input regarding management of funds provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other federal programs.

Historically, Soil and Water Conservation Districts have largely focused on assisting commercial agricultural producers with implementation of management practices for productivity consistent with best practices for natural resource stewardship. Of the three entities that originally formed the Curry Watersheds Partnership, only the Soil and Water Conservation District had legal capacity to accept and expend funds.

b. Watershed councils. The Lower Rogue and South Coast watershed councils are informal voluntary groups created in 1994 and 1995 by local citizens, pursuant to the larger state initiative described below.

Oregon watershed councils: background.

By the 1980s the rapid decline of Pacific Northwest salmon populations had been widely recognized as a crisis with wide-ranging implications. That decline reflected the interaction of a complex set of factors:

changing ocean conditions; past and contemporary fishing activity and regulation; hatchery practices; and reduction, especially during the past 150 years, in the amount and quality of accessible freshwater and estuarine habitat (both of which are required for salmonid reproduction and robust early growth). Habitat impairment and loss was largely attributable to the cumulative effects of federal, state, community and individual land use decisions, originally intended to facilitate economic activity, transportation, and development.

Anadromous fish were an especially useful indicator species because the salmon lifecycle requires use of virtually every part of a stream system. Reduction in quality and quantity of all types of salmon habitat were recognized as a “red flag” indicating more broadly the impairment of natural system functions that, ultimately, determine availability of water and food for all species.

Improving natural system functions presented complex political and logistical challenges, particularly because the issue was often framed as “people vs. fish.” Many people were unaware of the drastic reduction in salmon populations, while others dismissed its significance and broader implications. The U.S., as a rule, has not invested heavily in science education, and communities were not comfortable accepting scientific information that appeared designed to advance the interests of government agencies and “environmental” groups rather than community well-being. Others felt that other conditions affecting salmon should be prioritized over work on habitat restoration. Additionally, habitat restoration proposals appeared to present significant issues of equity, and to pose political and economic threat.

Rural areas usually represent the most cost-effective return on investment for habitat restoration work precisely because they have sustained the least profound alteration and damage. However, the land use practices and system modifications that have occurred on those lands tend to be closely tied to local economies, traditions, and cultural identities. Much of the freshwater and estuarine salmon habitat that could feasibly be restored, and the uplands that affected that habitat, were (and are) largely in private ownership. It was clearly possible, physically, to cost-effectively reverse the modifications on these lands, improve spawning habitat and rebuild the extent of and access to the chain of essential habitats. However, the sheer physical scale, private ownership, and potential adverse economic impacts would have made any unilateral attempt at government-enforced restoration politically and legally impossible.

The challenge was exacerbated by rural communities’ sense of political disenfranchisement: even where communities supported, in concept, the implementation of scientifically defensible watershed health improvements, planning and decision-making seemed to be vested in people least familiar with actual conditions and least concerned about local impacts. This underlying mistrust and sense of powerlessness undercut discussion of underlying science and discouraged exploration of creative solutions.

To break this impasse, Oregon had created and funded a “watershed health” initiative in the mid-1980s. In 1993 it introduced a strategy intended to empower and engage communities. The “watershed health” program created financial incentives for the voluntary formation of broadly-inclusive citizen councils at a watershed scale. Funding was available for councils to collect and share scientific information concerning the state of natural systems and salmonid populations and habitat within a watershed, and for working with knowledgeable specialists and willing landowners to make locally appropriate recommendations for projects designed to improve salmon habitat and overall watershed health.

The program as originally established offered funding for either of two major activity components: to support education and increase public understanding of natural system functions, especially as relevant to salmon; and to fund implementation of appropriate habitat improvement projects on sites with willing landowners. By 1995, state funding objectives were expanded to include council “core support,” i.e. for staff to directly serve council operational needs such as planning membership meetings and coordinating project development; and to cover office overhead expenses.

Councils were encouraged by the state to serve in advisory capacities to their local Soil and Water Conservation District. This arrangement minimized the degree of organizational logistics required of a council and capitalized on SCWD’s pre-existing expertise, legal status and professional staff. It maximized occasions for communication and sharing of information and expertise among the traditional Soil and Water Conservation District audience and the broader community, while providing built-in protections for use of state grant funds (as special districts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts observe state-mandated processes for financial management and accountability).

The state program also permitted grants to be made directly to nonprofit organizations that met the state’s standards for watershed council composition and purpose.

c. Partners’ legal relationships

The Lower Rogue and South Coast Watershed Council, formed in 1994 and 1995, are unincorporated voluntary groups.

The mission of the South Coast Watershed Council is “to protect and enhance the watersheds within the Council’s Service Area.” The council defines its service area as “all lands and waters that drain into the Pacific Ocean from New River south to the Winchuk River, excluding the Rogue River Basin.” South Coast Watershed Council goals include assessment of watershed conditions and implementation of projects; providing educational opportunities “about watershed and fish and wildlife”; and “promoting innovative practices...designed to support environmental integrity and economic stability” within the service area.

The Lower Rogue Watershed Council describes its purpose as “to protect, enhance, and restore long-term natural resources and economic stability of the Lower Rogue Watershed and the near shore environment.” Its mission involves working collaboratively within the watershed “to develop and carry out voluntary watershed protection, restoration, enhancement, and community engagement activities.”

In 1995 each council successfully submitted a grant application through the Curry Soil and Water Conservation District to fund a council coordinator position, and for at least the next ten years each continued to use the Soil and Water Conservation District structure for securing and managing grant funds.

Grants received and managed by the Soil and Water Conservation District during this period paid for technical staff responsible for physical restoration project planning and implementation in the councils’ watersheds, and for staff working on various community outreach and education efforts related to the councils’ purposes.

Because the Soil and Water Conservation District was the only entity legally capable of serving as an employer, and as fiscal sponsor was responsible for use of grant funds, it necessarily retained ultimate supervisory authority over all employees. This fiscal relationship was the essence of the original “Curry Watersheds Partnership.” Over time, as the partners’ activities became more complex, that fiscal relationship occasionally had the unanticipated effect of blurring lines of authority.

d. Curry Watersheds Nonprofit.

In 2006, while continuing to use the Soil and Water Conservation District as fiscal agent for state grants, the South Coast Watershed Council also created a separate 501(c)(3) organization through which to seek and manage certain grants from private foundations. In 2017, the governance structure of the nonprofit was reorganized to provide equal representation from all three partners. The partners worked with a consulting firm to create a formal “operating manual” summarizing their respective roles in planning and decision-making.

3. Education program

a. Curry Watersheds Partnership “watershed education” activities.

Current Curry Watersheds Partnership education activities originated in 2004, in response to funding available from the state watershed health program. Councils were free to propose virtually any project intended “to provide educational opportunity or promote public awareness of watershed enhancement benefits;” the state allowed councils to identify the most locally-appropriate strategy for building local awareness, understanding and “ownership” of scientific information relevant to watershed health, and especially to salmon.

At the time, state-funded education projects could be aimed at virtually any local audience, with any relevant focus, in any format. Grants were awarded to groups throughout the state to fund communications designed to enlist landowner participation in restoration projects; general community outreach providing scientific or factual information about any aspect of a particular watershed or subset of watershed functions, at any scale; formal classroom presentations; experiential learning activities during and after the school day; watershed and teacher professional training; interpretive displays posted at community centers and events; creation of outdoor learning spaces; and financial assistance to long-standing natural resource camps.

In practice, very few councils launched programs aimed at K-12 students rather than adults. Programs that were designed for school children typically consisted of fairly brief, generic presentations introducing students to the concept of a “watershed,” and/or explaining the salmon life cycle, and/or field trips to restoration sites. All tended to be made available on request rather than structured as sustained instruction programs to be integrated into the school year.

With state funding through the Soil and Water Conservation District, the South Coast Watershed Council and the Lower Rogue Watershed Council joined forces to launch a comparatively more intensive “watershed health” education service to schools in 2004. A staff member delivered ten “watershed lessons” to every 5th grade class in Curry County. Those first “watershed lessons,” adapted from sources including the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s “The Stream Scene,” the Salmon and Watersheds Project WET, and the “Adopt-A-Stream” program, acquainted students with the concept of a watershed, and with the salmon life cycle. Classroom units were delivered over a one-month period, culminating a field trip to a salmon stream.

In the following year, with continued OWEB funding, a new education lead continued to provide those classroom lessons and field trips. Over the next fifteen years, with teachers’ enthusiastic encouragement, she added and experimented with a variety of additional elements, activities and sites, generally highlighting various aspects of natural system functions and science in contemporary and traditional contexts, while substantially expanding the number of schools and grades served. Students observed and engaged in various “assessment” activities in agricultural, forested and urban settings, including a golf course, with a focus on salmonid life cycles and riparian areas.

The watershed education coordinator has built successful, strong relationships with schools and community groups, often by repeatedly introducing herself and the program to what has proven to be a steadily-changing assortment of elementary and middle school teachers. Offerings under the “watershed education” umbrella have grown to include various combinations of specific activities for different classrooms and grades, informed by Next Generation Science Standards adopted by the State of Oregon, and various curricula endorsed either by Oregon State University Extension’s Outdoor School program or similar sources. Activities are adjusted for different grades and in some cases re-customized each year in response to individual teacher perceptions of program relevance and value (with frequent teacher turnover). The general emphasis is on outdoor experiential learning and in some cases active engagement in stewardship or riparian restoration work.

Outdoor components have typically included field trips to observe salmon streams and conduct water quality monitoring, Adopt-a-Stream invasive removal and planting activities, summer camps, community events, planting of “pollinator gardens” and Outdoor School coordination and program delivery.

Additionally, over time the education lead has developed strong partnerships with other groups promoting awareness and appreciation of salmon and other fish, engagement with natural resources and/or watersheds. This has led to participation in 4-H camps, “natural resource day,” and a one-day “Reel Fish” event attended by every school. In 2009 a second staff member was added to assist with delivery of various elements.

To a lesser extent, staff also provide general community information on a more opportunistic basis, usually at local events, schools and festivals. A stream trailer illustrating watershed functions was constructed by the Partnership in the early years of the education program and has proven to be a useful tool when it can be deployed. However, use of the trailer is limited due to the complicated logistics and time required for set-up and removal, and to arrange to access and tow arrangements from storage to events in the region, and back.

b. “Foodshed” education:

In 2009 the South Coast Watershed Council launched a “foodshed” educational initiative for area schools with funding from the Gray Family Foundation. The existing watershed education assistant was hired to deliver “food systems” lessons based on Oregon State University Extension’s “Oregon Ag in the Classroom” curriculum to 5th graders in Port Orford and Gold Beach, with “watershed” education and field trips formerly provided to 5th graders redirected to 4th graders.

The following year, the foodshed coordinator assisted in creation of a school garden at the Port Orford elementary-middle school building, and in 2011 began helping assure operation of the school garden at the elementary-middle school in Gold Beach. In 2012, “foodshed” lessons were expanded to serve Brookings schools. School gardens are typically being maintained by either local Master Gardener groups, or by school garden coordinators employed by the schools. The Curry Watersheds Partnership staff have assisted schools in securing funds for garden coordinators and for garden infrastructure.

In subsequent years, “foodshed” services to school children have expanded to include a dessert cooking-activity at the local 4H camp and an after-school cooking club at the Port Orford school. From 2016-18, the program secured FoodCorps service member assistance in each of three years.

Activities provided to students in the “foodshed” category have gradually evolved to connect somewhat more clearly with “watershed education” and basic natural resource stewardship considerations. Ecological concepts appear in “foodshed” education through reference to, e.g., impacts of transportation on watershed health, and produce farmers’ needs for water and fertile soil. The activities include classroom instruction, and field trips to a cranberry bog, a sheep ranch (also the site of “watershed education” field trips), and an organic farm producing flowers, fruit and vegetables. These and other activities are generally focused on promoting awareness among school children of factors relevant to production of food, especially locally; alerting students to the importance and opportunities for food selection and healthy eating; and helping students learn to cook as a life skill. The foodshed program is also described as intended to inspire families to consider gardening or to consume more local produce.

In summary, “watershed” and “foodshed” education activities, though initially launched as two somewhat discreet initiatives with different funding sources, have increasingly been implemented to address topics related to one another by common scientific principles, approached from slightly different perspectives. Staff work closely together in some aspects of delivery for both subject areas, and have recently started using a single field site to illustrate both watershed and foodshed-related concepts.

Note: “Foodshed” activities directed at other audiences: The “foodshed education” umbrella has also included a group of activities conducted by the foodshed coordinator directed primarily at adults, with various health and/or economic development objectives. They are not discussed in this plan because they do not fall under the “education” definition now adopted by Curry Watersheds Partnership. However, they are briefly described below so that Curry Watersheds Partnership can evaluate these efforts for continued investment under a different Partnership program.

Community food insecurity, and efforts to encourage economic development through produce growing and distribution within the watershed, began to be incorporated into the “foodshed” education staff member’s work following the initial launch of Curry Watersheds Partnership “foodshed” lessons. These included funding for production of a report assessing local food insecurity; work to boost local produce farms’ profitability by connecting school cafeterias to local producers and funding for purchase of food; participating in local teams planning and implementing strategies to promote food-based tourism; training in starting a food business; development and maintenance of a website about locally-available foods; and promoting gleaning opportunities. The foodshed educator provides local and regional marketing assistance and promotion for local producers of vegetables and fruit; coordinates with OSU master gardeners and Food Preservers for information and presentations; leads a Regional Farm to School Education Hub (funded by ODA); and maintains the Curry Local Foods Facebook page. Outreach to adults includes “Farm to School” school events for parents.

c. Education funding history.

Watershed and foodshed education activities have to date been supported almost entirely with grant funds secured by the education staff, especially from the state watershed health program and Oregon Department of Education, and from the Gray Family Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, The Ford Family Foundation, Gordon Elwood Foundation, and Wild Rivers Coast Alliance. However, due to a legislative change, the state watershed health program can no longer fund “general” education unrelated to a specific restoration project.

Staff have also been resourceful in securing smaller grants with a particular ecological focus, e.g. pollinator gardens, but not all of these have been easily integrated into overall services.

The staff have also built a strong local network of in-kind support and partnerships with many groups interested in some subset of their work.

Rapidly expanding state and funder interest in science, technology, engineering, and math skills are opening possible opportunities to leverage that local support and to partner with foundations. Partnership staff have recently initiated discussions with the regional STEM hub regarding collaborative work. Similarly, staff have been able to encourage and partner with local schools that choose to seek funding from Oregon’s “Outdoor School” program for 5th or 6th graders.

A few generous local donors have provided some financial assistance in the past, but to date, other than education staff's grantwriting, there has been no focused effort by the Partnership or individual partner organizations to build community awareness or generate operating income. Some effort has been made by staff to generate earned income through school dinner events and sale of plants grown in school gardens.

IV. ANALYSIS

Curry Watersheds Partnership staff have consistently demonstrated substantial skill in delivery of experiential learning opportunity since 2004. Administrators and teachers consistently note that the specialized resources and learning opportunities they provide – exposure to natural science concepts, hands-on field science experience and challenges in an outdoor setting – are beyond schools' normal capacity, and provide significant and memorable learning opportunities for students.

Curry Watersheds Partnership education staff have also developed appreciable expertise in logistics of planning and managing field trips, in-class and after school activities under challenging conditions of inclement weather and challenging terrain. They have been flexible in testing possible additions or modifications, and enjoy strong, very positive relationships with all of the elementary and middle schools in the county.

At the same time, the use of "foodshed" and "watershed" labels for what is, essentially, experiential natural science education, seems to have prevented establishment of a clear and consistent program identity. Lack of articulation of specific goals and relationships among activities makes it more difficult for newly-arrived educators to instantly appreciate the value of participation.

As shown in the appended description of benefits derived from Outdoor School engagement, Curry Watersheds Partnership is already providing the kinds of experiences that can generate significant educational benefits. However, as currently configured the exact purpose, priorities and focus of the Partnership's services have been unclear, and too diffuse to allow efficient use of resources. Without a clear framework, staff are trying to do too many different things well, and experiencing unacceptable levels of stress.

A second issue is that -- especially with the state watershed health program no longer available as a funder of generic "watershed education" -- Curry Watersheds Partnership must communicate its educational objectives and effectiveness more clearly to funders. That work has commenced: this planning process has allowed the Partnership to articulate a clear mission, vision and goals for its educational services. The plan sets out a strategy for working closely with local teachers to enhance alignment of the established field trip opportunities with classroom needs, to support more extended educational benefit.

Implementation of this plan should allow Curry Watersheds Partnership to more easily show the relevance of its education program to a wide variety of granting entities. It should also make it easier for

potential individual private supporters to understand the direct connection between the Partnership's schools services, and community interests.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

identified by participating educators:

- a. Provides students with stimulating opportunity to learn in classroom and apply critical thinking in nontraditional context.
- b. Dedicated, knowledgeable, creative staff - well-liked.
- c. Curry Watersheds Partnership seen as invaluable hands-on learning in uniquely engaging outdoor setting.
- d. Schools value services to date:
 - i. field trips seen to energize and engage students;
 - ii. field trips not feasible w/o Curry Watersheds Partnership leadership and management.
 - iii. field trips introduce students to unfamiliar aspects of their community & surroundings.
 - iv. Curry Watersheds Partnership provides resources, equipment and tools for field learning.
 - v. Curry Watersheds Partnership manages trip logistics safely and effectively.
- e. Elementary teachers especially value assistance/opportunity to provide science education
- f. Teachers eager to partner for enhanced educational benefit.

external considerations:

- a. Broad community appeal: education understood as critical to community survival.
- b. Well-aligned generally with emerging government & cultural trends in education.
- c. Positive relationships with many diverse partners throughout region.
- d. Reflects community values, pride in productivity of natural and managed ecosystems.
- e. Creation of regional Outdoor School responds to user requests, is encouraged by state.
- f. Local private donors, major funders likely to support concentrated effort.
- g. Staff remains current in hands-on learning and Next Generation Science Standards.
- h. Curry Watersheds Partnership is respected and deemed credible (where known).
- i. History of successful school partnerships, effective delivery and positive student response.

WEAKNESSES:

Services:

- a. Connection between Curry Watersheds Partnership offerings and schools' educational goals insufficiently defined (relationship to standards & goals implicit but not articulated).
- b. Content somewhat unpredictable each year; responsive to funding opportunities rather than sustained vision.
- c. Teachers feel they cannot fully anticipate nature of learning opportunities on field trips, or prepare to best capitalize on student excitement when back in the classroom.
- d. Elementary school teachers lacking science backgrounds feel especially unprepared to recognize or fully capitalize on field trip learning.
- e. Teachers see current format as somewhat "silo'd"; would like to pool ideas for techniques to extend excitement generated by field trips to learning in other disciplines (match, writing, presentation skills).
- f. Staff time spent repeatedly re-introducing selves, explaining activities, and re-establishing relationships, due to high teacher/admin turnover, lack of clearly articulated education links, variability due to funding uncertainties, and overly "customized" offerings.
- g. Schools sometimes plan other events in conflict with scheduled field trips.
- h. School administrators do not feel aware of field trip schedules.
- i. Lack of standardized program leads to inefficiencies in planning and execution.
- j. "Curry Watersheds Partnership" is not well known; education program not connected in public mind to any other activities.
- k. Teachers perceive as somewhat disjointed within a grade, and between grades, would recommend more considered, cumulative sequence;
- l. Some presentations and subjects seem minimally cross-connected, e.g. nutrition, port visit (connections possible, but not made).
- m. School-employed managers of school gardens not included in education planning; garden visits often seem random and underdeveloped as learning opportunities.

Internal/Administrative:

[Note: Curry Watersheds Partnership initiated this planning project in recognition of these issues]

- a. Staff has received minimal organizational guidance as to education goals or priorities.
- b. Narrow funding base; need to transition from now-discontinued state funding program.
- c. Current activity labels ("watershed," "foodshed") greatly restrict appeal to potential funders.
- d. Content currently somewhat reflective of funder priorities.
- e. Internal decision-making structure for program unclear to staff and leaders.
- f. Overall approach has produced significant staff burden and inefficiencies.

- g. No agreed terminology or clarity in relationships among activities, either internally or on website.
- h. “Watershed” and “foodshed” activities are not widely perceived as having clear or consistent relationship to each other.
- i. Education field trips make little use of Curry Watersheds Partnership restoration activity (prospective or completed).

OPPORTUNITIES

Services:

- a. Teachers and administrators enthused, see enormous potential.
- b. Teachers are eager to participate in collaborative alignment planning, but must be compatible with existing schedules and time demands.
- c. Administrators expressly request and would welcome annual overview of goals tied to activities.
- d. Multiple local sites ideal for any of several possible Outdoor School formats.
- e. With supporting materials, teachers could use school gardens for hands-on science experience and use of critical thinking and problem solving, on their own schedules, with minimal need for advance planning or equipment.
- f. Curry Watersheds Partnership’s completed or planned restoration sites offer ripe opportunities for problem solving.

Funding:

- a. Emphasizing core educational values, critical thinking, etc. via natural sciences education speaks more powerfully to donors and grantors (vs. narrow labels of “watershed” or “foodshed”).
- b. New state legislation and financial incentives to schools for more hands-on learning.
- c. Local STEM hub already aware of Curry Watersheds Partnership services; interested in building relationship.
- d. Port Orford OSU Field Station participating in Oregon Marine Researchers & Educators program development.
- e. Port redevelopment may include new research labs & applied science opportunities.
- f. Outdoor School or family ‘nature’ programs.

THREATS AND RISK:

- a. Maintain current momentum re teacher engagement with program alignment.
- b. Staff not formally trained as educators (but proactive in learning ed strategies).
- c. School garden staff not technically required to work with Curry Watersheds Partnership.
- d. Risk of trying move too fast, achieve at too large scale (go for a “small diamond”)
- e. Overpromising to funders.
- f. Possible donor caution due to other failed local initiatives.

V. STRATEGIC PLAN

Threshold decisions:

Preliminary to planning, the Curry Watersheds Partnership agreed to the following definitional and scope provisions:

The term “education” will be used only with reference to services for school-age children;

The education program will focus first on refinement of services to students in grades 3-6 through collaborative work with teachers;

The education program will be open to newly discovered opportunities for service to students in upper grades, and will develop services for that group in a future planning period;

Curry Watersheds Partnership will no longer use the terms “watershed” and “foodshed” in staff position descriptions, or in describing its education program to schools, parents, and the general public (including on its website), and will instead promote awareness of its education services as providing students with experiential learning of natural science principles, as illustrated/applied in various regional contexts.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2020-2024

Curry Watersheds Partnership has adopted the following vision, mission and goals for its education program:

EDUCATION PROGRAM MISSION:

Provide hands-on youth education in outdoor settings, promoting curiosity, critical thinking, and community connections.

EDUCATION PROGRAM VISION:

Those we serve are equipped to recognize and participate effectively in decisions that impacts dynamic relationships connecting ecosystem, community, and individual health.

EDUCATION PROGRAM VALUES:

We will adhere to the following values as we execute our mission:

- Assure educational value through collaboration with local educators.
- Maximize impact through alignment with state educational standards.
- Assure equitable learning opportunities in all approaches to program delivery.
- Promote critical thinking and individual initiative by encouraging problem analysis, and development and evaluation of proposed solutions.
- Regularly measure effectiveness through objective means, and adjust accordingly.
- Acknowledge and honor traditional cultural values with respect to the natural world, and traditional applications of natural science principles.

Curry Watersheds Partnership has adopted the following goals and supporting objectives and actions for implementation 2020-2023.

Goal 1: Support school achievement of state and national educational goals relevant to Curry Watersheds Partnership mission.

Objective 1a: Assure consistency of program with administrator goals for school.

Action: Meet and discuss collaborative alignment plan with administrators.

Action: Incorporate administrator considerations into all planning.

Action: Meet personally, regularly with school boards, superintendents, principals to review any questions.

Action: Provide administrators with content alignment outline (created by educators' collaborative, below).

Objective 1b: Establish collaborative goal/standards alignment group to analyze & refine offerings.

Action: confirm educator participation from all school districts served.

Action: with educators, develop meeting schedules.

Action: secure funding to support alignment group meetings.

Objective 1c: Articulate alignments of CWP activities with educational standards

Action: prepare & distribute alignment meeting agenda & materials:
relevant NGSS/state standards;
summary of current & planned activities;
characterize core concepts illustrated by current & planned activities . (*e.g., basic science concepts common to issues of farm production, human nutrition, invasive vegetation management, salmon life cycle...*).

Action: (by alignment group) review/evaluate/adjust current and planned CWP activities to maximize synergy with other classroom instruction.

Objective 1d: Assure continuing assessment and responsiveness.

Action: develop and maintain system for objective measurement of outcomes

Action: with alignment group, regularly review outcomes and evaluate activities for possible improvements.

Goal 2: Structure education program to enhance cumulative learning and encourage broad skill development.

Objective 2a: With alignment group, establish learning sequence to guide Curry Watersheds Partnership services (grades 3-6 for this planning period)

Action: Identify relevant standards/goals/activities for each grade.

Action: Develop logical sequence of ideas from grade to grade.

Objective 2b: Maximize teacher options to capitalize on field trip experiences.

(in consultation with alignment group)

Action: develop & provide all teachers with pre-CWP-activity lesson ideas.

Action: develop field trip activity sheets for subsequent classroom use.

Action: develop suggestions for teacher-led activities post-field trip relevant to other disciplines (e.g., writing, presentation, design and evaluate responsive strategies).

Objective 2c: Facilitate provision of 6th grade capstone “Outdoor School” opportunities.

Action: Seek school support/designation to prepare Outdoor School funding application.

Action: Develop options for local day-camp and/or overnight camp experiences.

Objective 2d: Facilitate and encourage educational use of on-site outdoor resources.

Action: work with school garden coordinators on alignment/activities.

Action: plan Adopt a Stream visits to align with learning plan.

Objective 2e: Inspire students to link skill development with career opportunities.

Action: maximize student opportunities in classroom or field to meet adults employed in relevant areas, and to learn of access to occupational opportunities/training paths.

Goal 3: Establish foundation for program sustainability and growth.

Objective 3a: Expand community awareness & understanding of program.

Action: highlight clear education mission, vision, values, service area, etc. on website.

Action: produce and distribute attractive, succinct program summary sheets outlining topics/activity/goals, educational relevance.

Action: Present re program at least annually to city and county governments, school boards, service clubs, and other groups interested in community betterment.

Objective 3b: Highlight need/opportunities for support from local community.

Action: develop signature annual event tied to mission, e.g., community dinner w/ locally-produced foods, student products.

Action: discreetly indicate availability of tax-deductions for gifts, IRS number, and simple contact information on all written and electronic products.

Action: in all public presentations note value of local support for grant match, etc.

Action: consider organizing community-wide promotional events, e.g. multiple restaurant donate % of one day's take during tourist season (posters & psas maximize p.r. and good will for participating restaurants).

Objective 3b: Maintain visibility with likely sources of information and opportunities.

Action: maintain system for securing school administrator & teacher feedback.

Action: maintain communication/activity updates with relevant education groups, e.g. Oregon Marine Researchers and Educators, regional STEM hub.

Action: build informal relationships with other entities offering similar programs elsewhere in Pacific NW.

Objective 3c: Develop earned income opportunities consistent with mission

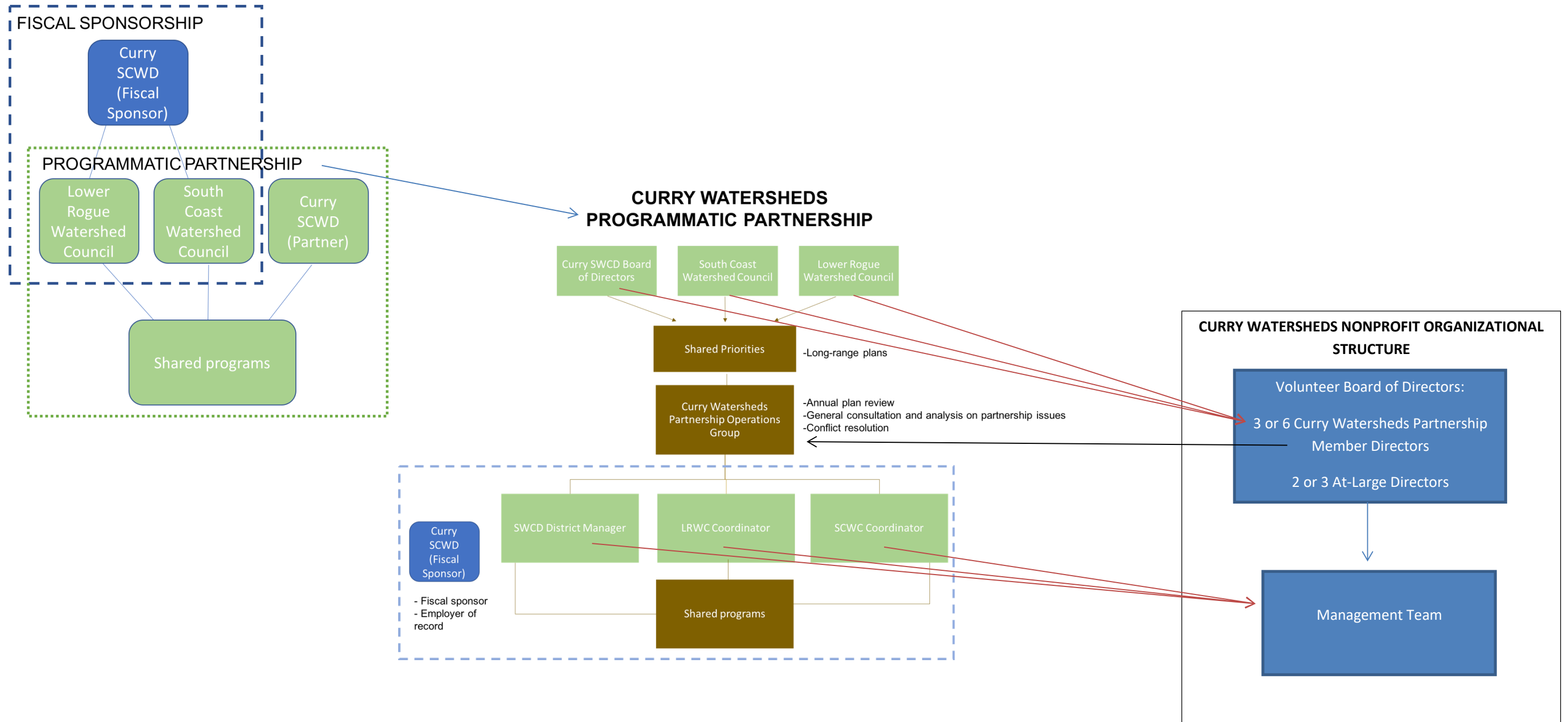
Action: Work with SBA or similar office to evaluate potential for operation of Outdoor School in various configurations.

Action: Evaluate potential for profitable operation of summer camp program.

Action: investigate potential for eventual operation of family/group camp or outdoor activities on fee basis.

APPENDICES:

- A. Curry Watersheds Partnership Structure**
- B. Impacts of experiential outdoor learning (Outdoor School research summary)**
- C. Curry Foods Assessment Summary 2015**



OREGON OUTDOOR SCHOOL PURPOSES/DESCRIPTION

Source: friendsofoutdoorshcool.org/why-outdoor-school

“Significant research supports the benefits of ODS:

- Increased achievement and comprehension in math and science
- Improved testing scores and attendance
- Motivation to learn increases and class performance improves
- ODS programming directly supports systems thinking and STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) learning and meets state education curriculum standards

[Learning in the field creates] “...a unique chance for kids to experience the connections among living things and biological systems, such as watersheds or riparian forests. Instead of learning these concepts from a book, students develop critical thinking skills by asking questions in the field then working together to investigate, measure and report their discoveries. Students simply can’t get the same natural science experience inside a classroom.”

“...students conduct real-world natural science projects, nurturing a lifelong connection to the land. This is an important aspect of the program; Oregon’s economy—and future—relies on supporting our natural resource industries, such as timber, tourism, outdoor recreation, farming and more. Outdoor School is a great way to teach future generations that they don’t need to choose between our economy and our environment.”

OUTDOOR SCHOOL INCREASED:

- Confidence: 90%
- Public Speaking Skill: 85%
- Self-advocacy skills: 79%
- Desire to be a good student: 71%
- Interest in other volunteer opportunities: 87%
- Interest in math and science: 65%

Curry County: Community Food Assessment results 2015

Opportunities in Agriculture

1. Facilitate and increase institutional purchasing of local food by creating a connection between local farmers, ranchers, and fishermen and the institutions in our region. That way food production at a local level will have a greater capacity for growth and new markets can be created

- Identify institutional buyers throughout Curry County and beyond – K–12 schools, Head Start programs, colleges, hospitals, assisted living facilities and restaurants.
- Identify producers throughout Curry County (Curry County Local Food Guide can assist with this).
- Identify barriers for producers in selling products to institutions and for institutions in purchasing products from producers.
- Address ways to overcome barriers to local purchasing.
- Establish a platform to connect farmers with institutional buyers.

2. Identify, encourage, and provide information for producers interested in value added opportunities of their raw food products.

- Producers who can benefit from value added products include farmers, ranchers, harvesters and fishermen.
- Identify the economic value and impact of value added products (provide more local food options for local consumers, increase income for producers etc.).
- Identify value added grant opportunities and connect potentially interested farmers with opportunities.
- Connect producers with value added trainings and webinars;
 - Local and value added curriculum including classes and workshops have been developed by NeighborWorks Umpqua in Douglas County. This is a chance to partner and utilize their resources or create similar curriculum for Curry County.

3. Identify, examine, and promote the economic impact of sourcing local food for the county.

- Not everyone realizes or understands the positive impact distributing and purchasing local food can have on the local economy. This topic has been researched in other communities and should be addressed in Curry County. There could be a study conducted to research the extent of the effect of local food purchasing. This would provide more information and a better case for marketing the importance of local food purchasing to the county.

4. Generate farmer-to-farmer networking opportunities, especially for small-scale farmers and beginning farmers.

- A common theme when talking with farmers throughout Curry County was a desire to connect with each other and have more learning opportunities such as workshops, farm tours, equipment sharing, work parties, identifying funding opportunities, potlucks, and more.

5. Conduct feasibility studies for meat processing and for cranberry marketing.

- A feasibility study was conducted in 2011 for the construction of a USDA Inspected Meat Processing Plant in Coos and Curry Counties. Unfortunately, the family business interested in taking on this project decided the venture was too expensive.
- An alternative to this large venture could be forming satellite cut and wrap operations. How it works is local quarter and half beefs are purchased from slaughterhouses and cut and wrapped by local butchers for local retail sale. Laura Gwin at Oregon State University would be a great contact to discuss the feasibility of satellite cut and wrap operations for Coos and Curry County.
- According to local producers, the Oregon South Coast cranberry is a superior product with its deeper red hue and sweeter taste. There could be research conducted on our cranberries confirming this belief and a feasibility study to determine alternative marketing potential for our cranberry product.

6. Continue to update and expand the [Curry County Local Food Guide](#).

- The main goal of creating the guide is to assist Curry County residents and tourists in accessing fresh, locally produced food and help local producers market their products to consumers. The guide could expand to include restaurants that serve local foods, processors, more local producers, farm stands, and U-pick options, map of producers, and much more.

7. Identify storage and processing facilities available in Curry County and research the feasibility of building larger-scale storage and processing facilities.

- There may be enough small-scale storage and processing facilities available in Curry County. However, the facilities may not be well advertised and locals may not know they exist or how to access them. Creating a list of storage and processing facilities throughout our area and marketing the list could be beneficial for producers.
- After identifying what exists, we may find there is not enough of these facilities to fulfill the needs of our producers. A feasibility study for larger-scale storage and processing could be conducted.

Opportunities in Fishing

1. The ports in Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings are currently creating and implementing strategic plans focused on renewing and improving infrastructure to primarily support the commercial fishing industry, but also recreational fishing.

- The strategic plans were not available to the public during the time the assessment was first written. Including this information in the assessment would help better identify opportunities for the fishing industry.

2. More education and outreach about the commercial fishing industry should be provided to schools and to the community. There should be more information about types of fisheries

caught in Curry County, where to buy local seafood, fishing seasons, regulations, and cooking classes focused on how to prepare seafood.

3. There are fish such as Albacore tuna that can be sold by the fishermen directly off of their boats if the fishermen have the correct licenses. More marketing efforts should be made to inform the public about fishermen who sell directly off their boats to consumers, the types of fish available for purchase, and the timeframe this usually occurs.

4. Investigate Boat to School grant possibilities for school districts.

5. A thorough assessment focused directly on the local commercial fishing industry could be conducted to identify feasible projects.

- Identify grants available to fishermen
- Improve communication and engagement among the public, local government, and commercial fishermen.
- Identify access to market opportunities for local fishermen.

Opportunities in Community Food Access

1. Encourage an increase in participation for those eligible for [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#).

- In 2009, 6,476 individuals qualified for SNAP benefits, but only 3,452 individuals signed up and received benefits. If all who qualified to receive SNAP would have participated in the program, it would have meant benefits for an additional 2,824 individuals, who would have the spending power of an additional \$2,143,286 .
- Encouraging an increase in SNAP participation will benefit those who are at risk of hunger; it will bring more federal money to the area; and it will support stores and farmers' markets where SNAP benefits are accepted (Addressing Hunger, 2010).

2. Encourage stores and farmers' markets that do not accept SNAP benefits to do so.

- Identify barriers to accepting SNAP and host workshops for managers to help address these barriers
- Encourage farmers' markets and stores that accept SNAP to provide more outreach about how to use SNAP at the market
- Recruit one new farmers' market to accept SNAP by 2015. (For example, Curry Grown and Crafted out of Gold Beach would like to accept SNAP at the farmers' market, but the manager mentioned she is not sure what to do.)

3. Increase nutrition and cooking education throughout Curry County

- Identify organizations currently providing nutrition and cooking education in Curry County, such as [OSU Extension](#) with their food preservation program. Provide marketing assistance so there is greater outreach to the public about what is currently being offered.
- Identify the gaps in nutrition and cooking education for the county.

- Partner with existing organizations to develop curriculum to cover the gaps. Or, find already developed curriculum from organizations, such as [Share Our Strength](#) with their Cooking Matters at the Store Tours

4. Increase educational efforts for local foraging opportunities.

- Curry County has an abundance of options, including clamming, fishing, mushroom foraging, and wild game hunting. For those experiencing barriers to accessing food, foraging allows individuals the opportunity to access food, usually just for the price of a license.
- Identify foraging classes and educational materials available in the community to assist community members in acquiring foraging knowledge and skills.

5. Explore the feasibility of creating a gleaners group.

- As previously mentioned, there are no formal gleaning groups in Curry County, though several people interviewed showed interest in being a part of one. Gleaning groups pick surplus fruits and vegetables off the grower's property and donate the extra food to community organizations, schools, food bank, or food pantries.
- Identify if there is enough interest to create a formal gleaning group and who could coordinate the group.

Opportunities in Community Food Efforts

1. Create and support a food system council or coalition of regional stakeholders.

- The council should be comprised of stakeholders from all facets of the food system including farmers, ranchers, fishermen, nonprofit organizations, city government, interested citizens, retailers, and distributors.
- As there will be one Resource Assistance for Rural Environments AmeriCorps member next year for Coos and Curry Counties, it was decided the coalition should represent a united Coos & Curry food system council.
- Those involved with creating the council should host planning workshops to gather interested stakeholders and create a strategic plan for 2014-2015.
- Identify needs within the county that are not currently being addressed by other organizations. Focus on finding ways to address and take action on those needs.
- This council could serve as an incubator to help initiate regional food system projects.

2. Increase communication and partnerships between all involved in the food system.

- Increase communication between existing food-oriented organizations.
- Create one website for everything Coos/Curry Foods.
- Continue to update the Curry County Local Food Guide.

3. Increase community food system outreach and education.

- Plan service-learning opportunities and field trips to share gardening strategies for citizens interested in learning about growing in their own backyard garden.

- Sponsor community meals featuring locally sourced food where attendees can learn about area farmers who supplied food, where to access these local foods, how to cook what is being served nutrition of foods being prepared, etc.
- Organize informational booths at Farmers' Markets, fairs, festivals, and other community events.
- Continue to update and expand Curry Local Food Guide.
- Continue to manage Curry Local Foods Facebook page.
- Continue to update and manage Curry Local Foods website.

4. Increase visibility of local food in grocery stores, co-ops, and markets.

- The grocery stores, co-ops, and markets throughout Curry County do provide local foods for purchase. It would be a good idea to assess the foods that are currently stocked in each of the retail outlets in the county.
- Retail outlets could increase marketing around those local foods, such as having a 'local food only shelf', in-store displays listing the local food options and profiles of the farms, and in-store samples of the local foods available for purchase.

5. Community Outreach

- Nurture food-based educational opportunities through existing organizations and groups.
- Coordinate events and programs around local foods (expert speakers, Farm dinners, Farm tours, gleaning opportunities).
- Write press releases, newsletters, Facebook pages, and Website updates.

6. Increase food systems and garden education to school districts throughout Curry County.