

**From:** [Alex Cherin](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Karps, Jennifer](#)  
**Subject:** April 26 - Council Testimony Agenda Item # 323  
**Date:** Friday, April 21, 2023 4:14:57 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Council Testimony - Agenda Item No. 323.pdf](#)

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TO: City Council  
CC: Jennifer Karps, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES)  
FROM: Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition  
RE: City Council Meeting Agenda Item #323  
DATE: April 26, 2023

Dear City Council,

Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition is pleased to recommend that you support continued funding for the Bureau of Environmental Services' (BES) Neighborhood to the River (N2R) program. As a N2R program grantee, we collaborated with the bureau to pilot a successful watershed-themed project last fall that stands ready to be replicated in other Portland communities.

Through this project, four local artists transformed refrigerator-sized stormwater management equipment located adjacent to sidewalks into vibrant murals in the Buckman, Brooklyn, Hosford-Abernethy and Richmond neighborhoods. [Here's a map](#) – we hope you will go see them!



Through a call to artists which drew 15 applicants, Michelle Swann, Kristie Winther, Paola De La Cruz, and Davey Barnwell were selected for this effort. Each mural they created educates the community about our human connection to the Willamette River, emphasized native plants, and reminds passersby of the fish and wildlife that (like us) depend on clean water.

Additionally, this project helped to solve a vexing problem: deterring graffiti and damage to important City-owned property. The response from surrounding neighbors has been nothing but positive!

SE Uplift wholeheartedly encourages you to continue funding for the N2R program so other neighborhoods may benefit from the positive improvements this project has made.

Respectfully,

Alex Cherin,  
Partnership Manager  
SE Uplift Neighborhood Coalition

**Alex Cherin** | *he/him*

Partnership and Grantmaking Programs Manager

[SE Uplift Neighborhood Coalition](#)

3534 SE Main St | Portland, OR 97214

[alex@seuplift.org](mailto:alex@seuplift.org) | (503) 232-0010 ext. 2

[Schedule a meeting with me!](#)

During COVID-19 SE Uplift staff are working remotely some days of the week. I am usually in the office Tuesdays through Thursdays from 10 am – 5 pm. I am available via email other weekdays.

**Access Statement:** SE Uplift Neighborhood Coalition values meaningful access to all programs, services, and activities. Please contact me at least 48 hours prior to attending an event to request accommodations. You are welcome to reach out at any time to request any of our materials in alternative formats or for any other access needs. SE Uplift is on the 14, 15, 66, and 75 TriMet bus lines and our space has parking on-site. We have an accessible entrance on one floor.

TO: City Council  
CC: Jennifer Karpis, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES)  
FROM: Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition  
RE: City Council Meeting Agenda Item #323  
DATE: April 26, 2023

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Respectfully,

Alex Cherin,  
Partnership Manager  
SE Uplift Neighborhood Coalition

**From:** [Heather King](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#); [Karps, Jennifer](#)  
**Subject:** Written Testimony for Agenda Item #323 on April 26, 2023  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 2:21:59 PM  
**Attachments:** [N2R LOS.pdf](#)

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Hello

Attached please find written testimony from the Columbia Slough Watershed Council in support of item #323 - re-authorize the Bureau of Environmental Services' Neighborhood to the River (N2R) grant program.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Thank You,  
Heather

Heather King  
Executive Director, Columbia Slough Watershed Council

Consider supporting CSWC's mission and programming by making a [donation or becoming a monthly supporter](#)!

Read all about our last year of programming and advocacy for the slough in our [Annual Report](#)!

7040 NE 47th Avenue | Portland, OR 97218  
[www.columbiaslough.org](http://www.columbiaslough.org)  
P: 503-281-1132, Ext 101

I use the pronouns: She/Her (*[why?](#)*)



Portland City Council  
1221 SW Fourth Avenue

Portland, OR 97204

RE: Written Testimony for Agenda Item #323 April 26th, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of agenda item #323 to re-authorize the Bureau of Environmental Services' Neighborhood to the River (N2R) grant program. At the Columbia Slough Watershed Council (CSWC), we have been working to protect and enhance the Columbia Slough and its watershed through community engagement, education, and restoration for over 25 years. The Columbia Slough watershed is an important corridor for wildlife and is home to numerous natural areas for neighbors to enjoy. The watershed has come a long way over the past couple of decades, but there are still a lot of improvements that can be made to water quality, wildlife habitat, and access to nature. N2R is a cornerstone program that helps community members, and local non-profits make critical improvements to one of Portland's most important natural resources while building social equity in the process.

N2R has funded multiple projects for CSWC in the past, including riparian restoration at industrial facilities and local habitat corridors in the public right-of-way of upland residential areas. These projects helped address limiting factors in the watershed's health and leveraged natural resource improvement projects to develop leadership and workforce skills with young adults in the area. Overall, these projects helped install thousands of native plants and trees while supporting over 200 hours of youth workforce development and connected 110 volunteers in the shared stewardship of their neighborhood's natural resources.

The guiding principles that N2R uses to identify and select projects helps make this program impactful for the environment and the community. N2R is among the easiest programs in the City for community organizations to navigate and is responsive to the needs of the people they fund and the communities who benefit from the projects. This approach allows grant recipients to spend more time doing important work and spend less time with grant administration tasks.

An extension of the N2R program would allow Portland's community-based organizations to jump start new programs and projects that help improve environmental health and engage the communities that they know and serve the best. The Council has a range of projects, including industrial riparian area improvements, youth





workforce development in public natural areas, and partnerships for naturescaping and rain garden installation, that would otherwise likely go unfunded without N2R's focus on living green infrastructure, watershed health, and community benefit in specific geographies of the city.

We strongly support the extension of this important program and see it as critical to creating healthy watersheds for the betterment of neighbors and wildlife alike.

Thank you for your time and attention,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather King". The script is fluid and cursive.

Heather D. King  
Executive Director  
Columbia Slough Watershed Council

**From:** [Emily Pinkowitz](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Karp, Jennifer](#)  
**Subject:** Written Testimony for Agenda Item #323 on April 26, 2023  
**Date:** Monday, May 1, 2023 11:34:29 AM  
**Attachments:** [EteffanyGarcia\\_WrittenTestimony\\_AgendaItem323onApril-26-2023.pdf](#)

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To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing from Portland Audubon to submit testimony to support Your Neighborhood to the River funding, Agenda Item #323 on April 26, 2023.

In 2021 and 2022, Portland Audubon received Your Neighborhood to the River funds to support our Green Leaders program. This initiative provides paid training to young people from Hacienda CDC, Oregon's largest Latino-led, Latino-serving housing organization, to develop and lead environmental education programs with families in their own communities. Each year, from February-June, eight young adults (age 15-19) who live in or near Hacienda CDC developments along the Columbia Corridor join us as Green Leaders. They learn about watershed health, native plants and environmental justice, then put that knowledge into practice leading nature education afterschool programs for children in their communities. In 2022, together with staff from Portland Audubon, Hacienda and our partners from the Cully-based non-profit Verde, Green Leaders:

- Joined 150 hours of training about nature education, Pacific Northwest ecology, environmental justice, the elements that contribute to a healthy watershed, and the role we each play in stormwater management.
- Gained 40+ hours of experience leading programs in Spanish and English that connected children and families to the watershed, and raised awareness about pollution prevention and native plant ecology.
- Collaborated with Backyard Habitat Certification Program (BHCP) to record Spanish/English educational videos about the benefits and importance of native plants, watershed stewardship, and pollinators.

In total, Green Leaders connected 40 children and adults to the watershed through afterschool programs and community planting sessions at three different Hacienda CDC sites.

Your Neighborhood to the River funding supports vital leadership among underrepresented communities by activating young adults from Hacienda as organizers and educators developing watershed education programs in response to the needs of their own community. The Green Leaders program is unique in three key ways:

1. Green Leaders learn about environmental education from educators of color who draw from their own lived experience. Portland Audubon Green Leader staff are Latina and speak Spanish, and one Educator was a Green Leader herself for 2 years. Together, our team directly reflects the experience of the youth we work with.
2. Green Leaders become leaders in their own community, organizing and teaching families at Hacienda sites. They act as near-peer mentors to children whose backgrounds mirror their own. They develop the confidence to lead activities with their own community, where they feel safe, supported and seen in ways that are in distinct contrast to the environmental field as a whole. One Leader shared: *"When you are a person of color, and you know you will be working with other people of color, you can*

*“speak your language without getting judged, and feel comfortable... And when a kid of color is learning environmental education [from a GL]... kids can learn that too.”*

Because Leaders are both learning from mentors from their own community and becoming mentors themselves, they learn and teach about watershed health in ways that are uniquely reflective of their own culture and lived experience.

3. The program is a collaboration with Hacienda CDC (Oregon's largest Latino-led, Latino-serving organization), and Verde (a Cully-based, BIPOC-led environmental justice and advocacy organization). Through this program, we are able to strengthen partnerships between multiple organizations that work to improve watershed health for communities along the Columbia Corridor, deepening collaboration between representatives from Hacienda and Verde, with Hacienda residents themselves as the drivers for all decision-making.

Supported by this collective, the Green Leaders program engages residents in watershed health literacy and stormwater management more cohesively and fosters ongoing partnerships between neighbors. Together, these partnerships promote sustainable stormwater management and watershed health literacy in communities of people who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and provide guidance to making informed decisions that enrich community and watershed health.

Your Neighborhood to the River provides essential support for the program including the cost of materials, staff time, and, most importantly, Green Leader stipends. These stipends provide Green Leaders with the necessary financial support to be able to participate in this program while also contributing to their family's monthly income. From 2021 to 2022, the number of youth participating in this program doubled. In addition, we've begun to foster the deep trust and relationships with families that only comes with time. Continued support from the City Council for Your Neighborhood to the River now will help us begin to see the full impact of this collaboration, inspiring leaders for environmental change among children, young adults, and their families.

Attached below is an additional letter of support from a past Green Leader, Estefanny Garcia.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Emily Pinkowitz  
Director of Education  
Portland Audubon

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\*Please forgive the brevity of this email. I have a condition that currently makes writing on screens challenging. For a faster response, please call or text 646-734-7361\*

**Emily Pinkowitz**  
Director of Education  
*pronouns: she/her*  
**Audubon Line:** 971-222-6118  
**Cell:** 646-734-7361





Written Testimony for Agenda Item #323 on April 26, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Esteffany, I was a Portland Audubon Green Leader for 3 years. The Green Leaders program works with young people from Hacienda CDC apartments to learn about nature and lead afterschool and camps with Hacienda families.

Because of Your Neighborhood to the River, last year as part of this program we went to different kinds of watersheds in Portland and then we tested the water quality and then we measured the dissolved oxygen of the rivers. During after school sessions on Hacienda sites, we had kids bring water from their house and compared it to a water sample from Balch Creek. We had kids mix dish soap with water and then tested the dissolved oxygen and talked about different things that can affect the quality of water in our watersheds. For example, how household chemicals like dish soap can be bad and how we should pick up after our dogs because that also makes it back to our waters.

This made a difference, to myself and the community, because now I can continue teaching about watersheds and their health to new groups and individuals and my community has a better understanding about the importance of different bodies of water as habitat for wildlife and where our water comes from.

I hope that you will continue to fund this program again so that we can keep connecting the community to the water.

Sincerely,

Esteffany Garcia

Portland Audubon Green Leader & Columbia Corridor resident