

Oregon Country Fair: 50 Years of Stewardship

Since its formation in 1969, Oregon Country Fair (OCF) has strived to live artfully and authentically on the earth while practicing reverence for the land. Over the last 50 years, the fair family has worked together to steward the fair's 400 acres on the west bank of the meandering Long Tom River—both during the three-day fair event and throughout the year. Here's a summary of our efforts:

- **Stewarding the land.** The OCF site serves as an important wildlife refuge linking the Fern Ridge/West Eugene wetlands, the Long Tom Watershed, and Central Oregon Coast Range habitats. Since 1990, a Land Use Management Plan (LUMP) has guided our efforts to restore and protect the fair and its surrounding properties. This plan calls for revering the land in many ways, including the preservation of designated "green zones" and forests. It also calls for leaving some land undeveloped such as the 40-acre "Unorganized Territory" on the western portion of the site.
- **Restoring our waters .** The fair has been proactively working to restore its rivers and streams, including stretches of the Long Tom River and Indian Creek. OCF preserves large wood, builds pools, and plants native vegetation along these watersheds to improve water quality and promote wildlife habitat. Working together with the City of Veneta and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the fair has also replaced a bridge crossing, added fish-friendly culverts to allow the passage of cutthroat trout, and added meanders to Indian Creek to recreate a more natural waterway. In addition, the fair has been fostering native vegetation growth within the 24-acre Mauldin Marsh, which was historically grazed by cattle.
- **Managing native vegetation.** The fair property is home to hardwood and conifer forests, grasslands, wetlands, and riparian vegetation. OCF encourages a diversity of native vegetation by promoting the growth of trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses in key areas throughout the site. Brush cutting and nails in trees are both prohibited. To promote healthy populations of plants and wildlife, the fair waits for flowers to seed and shrubs to produce berries before pruning them back. We also remove as little vegetation as possible when preparing the paths and booths for the fair event.
- **Caring for wildlife.** More than 110 species of birds have been identified on the fair site, with at least 29 species known to nest here. In addition, there are dozens of other wildlife species that call the fair home including the Roosevelt Elk, Black-tailed Deer, Black Bear, River Otter, American Beaver, Western Pond Turtle, Pacific Tree Frog, and Northern Red-legged Frog. The fair's volunteer Wildlife Team works throughout the early summer to identify nesting birds and other wildlife, and then divert fair activities away from sensitive areas. They also conduct surveys and host free talks throughout the year to educate the local community about the fair's native wildlife.
- **Preserving history.** OCF is a steward of archaeological sites covering almost 10,000 years of human use. These sites reflect the history of the area as a gathering place to collect and process plants and animals to support subsistence lifestyles. Archaeological findings of subsurface ovens that contain camas, acorns, and hazelnuts are evidence of ancient cultures that processed and stored food. OCF protects these archeological sites by promoting zero ground disturbance into known areas, and by educating the local community about the fair's archeology. The fair has been recognized by the Association of Oregon Archaeologists for its dedication to these resources.
- **Recycling our waste.** For more than a decade, OCF has been working toward the ambitious goal of a waste-free fair. Our award-winning recycling program includes the use of durable and biodegradable plates, cups, and utensils. It also features the placement of water spigots throughout the site to encourage the use of reusable water bottles. The fair currently recycles more than 25 tons of metal, plastic, glass, and cardboard each year. We also strive to reduce the amount of material we generate by reusing materials whenever possible.

- **Composting our scraps.** At OCF, our goal is to reuse our waste rather than haul it off to the landfill. We currently compost more than 45 tons of materials each year, including food scraps, paper, and biodegradable dishware. Compost bins are set up at recycling stations throughout the fair to encourage fairgoers to deposit these materials. The scraps are then composted on-site and used to restore walking paths throughout the fair.
- **Reducing our carbon footprint.** The fair encourages the use of public transportation to minimize our carbon footprint. For 20 years, the fair has provided free shuttles from Eugene. In 2013, OCF started the "Fare on the Fair" program that picks up the tab for the entire Lane Transit District (LTD) system for the three days of the fair in July. The fair offers bike corrals where cyclists can lock their bikes and has also partnered with online ride share sites to provide a carpooling network for fairgoers and staff. At the fair site itself, OCF relies on pedicabs and locally made and sourced handcarts to reduce vehicle traffic and protect paths. It also partially powers its trucks and other equipment with biodiesel fuel. All of these efforts are helping to reduce carbon emissions that contribute to global warming.
- **A commitment to renewable energy.** The fair is an early adopter of alternative energy sources. Since 1982, Energy Park has been informing guests about solar, wind, and geothermal energy as well as energy conservation. For years, the main stage was powered by solar energy, and now Energy Park, Community Village, Blue Moon and the Shady Grove entertainment stages are operated by solar energy supplied by the Energy Park Electric Company. In addition, three showers located in Energy Park are heated 100 percent by sun energy during fair operating hours. Additionally, the Peach Power revolving fund directs a portion of fair revenues to an alternative energy project that exports solar power to the grid.
- **Growing our own.** OCF grows its own vegetables to feed staff who set up the fair. A 1-1/2 acre parcel at Alice's Wonderland is managed by a 14-person crew that focuses on early season crops ranging from broccoli to kale to potatoes. The fair sources its seeds locally, and grows only organic, non-GMO food. The garden crew has been known to produce more than \$8,000 of organic produce in a single year!
- **Selling sustainably.** "Handmade" and "homegrown" are signature attributes of the Oregon Country Fair. The fair offers a sustainable shopping experience by requiring that crafts be handcrafted, handmade, homegrown, hand-gathered or significantly altered by the person selling them. Likewise, food booths are encouraged to use organic and local ingredients. Both crafts and food must be sold by the people who made them.
- **Purchasing with intention.** The fair operates by a "seventh generation intention," meaning that it strives to conduct all of its business—including purchasing decisions—in consideration of people and other beings who will inhabit the planet 200 years from now. Whenever possible, OCF buys products that are local, organic, and durable, and that contain the least packaging. The fair also prohibits the sale of unsustainable materials such as glow sticks as well as the use of disposable plastic cups, plates, bowls, and utensils.
- **A long-term ecological vision.** As OCF approaches its 50th anniversary, it has adopted a series of long-term goals, two of which focus on sustainability. One goal, "improve our land and facilities," includes tripling the fair's use of solar electricity. Another goal, "steward our lands in accordance with ecological standards," calls for the heightened preservation of ecologically significant areas. The fair creates an annual report to show its progress toward implementing this vision.