

FALL • WINTER 2024

# BEYOND TOXICS NEWSLETTER

## OUR MISSION

We envision a society where everyone has equitable access to healthy food and clean air and water, and underserved communities are included in decision making processes that affect them.



This fall, our **Rise as Leaders** youth cohort kicked off with a habitat restoration work party at **Golden Gardens Park**, where they planted native Wapato and removed invasive species to support local ecosystems. Youth leaders also brainstormed park improvements, envisioned new educational stops, wildlife information, and community-friendly additions to this beloved outdoor space.



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Reflecting on my personal journey to join Beyond Toxics, two experiences with toxic chemical exposure in New Orleans propelled me to dedicate 25 years to advancing environmental justice. I witnessed corporate indifference and institutional injustice towards the most vulnerable people, often children and young women.

Beyond Toxics emerged in January 2001, a time when the words “environmental justice” was met with skepticism and even laughter! We worked tirelessly to highlight how pollution disproportionately impacts marginalized communities throughout Oregon.

Looking back over the decades, you’ve been our partner to win lasting environmental health protections framed upon environmental justice principles.

Our signature approach is to rely on the experiences of Oregon’s most impacted and underrepresented communities to shape new statewide laws. With this strategic approach – combining community voices with our expertise – **we’ve successfully shut down super-polluters and increased regulatory protections for downwind communities!**

Our pesticide reduction advocacy led to critical protections for farmworkers and schoolchildren from toxic chemicals.

With the wind in our sails and my experienced staff at the ready, I feel positive about Beyond Toxics’ upcoming leadership transition building up to my retirement this spring. I’m eager to support this team of leaders to launch freshly-imagined initiatives to meet the needs of future generations!

We pledge to fully respond to the startling results of our national elections and inevitable attacks on America’s foundation of regulatory protections that safeguard our health and our planet’s ecosystems.

**Beyond Toxics will never back down from defending communities and the environment.**

Now is exactly when the people of Oregon need to do everything in our power to advance local nonprofit leadership for environmental and social justice protections. Please join us to celebrate Beyond Toxics’ 25th Anniversary of victories! **Your donation ensures we can continue to step up and get it done!**

My pride in our accomplishments is only surpassed by my gratitude for you and your many years of support for Beyond Toxics. We now stand at the forefront of effective action on Oregon’s most pressing environmental and human health problems. Full speed ahead for a future of environmental justice protections!



Sincerely,





Above: Beyond Toxics staff and allies making a splash at the National People's Climate March.

## FIGHTING BACK AGAINST BIG POLLUTERS

Our mission is simple: **We work to protect the health of all Oregonians and our environment from the dangers of toxic chemicals and pollution.** We believe everyone deserves to live in a community that prioritizes clean air, water, and safe environments where we can all thrive! That's why we are proud to lead and support groundbreaking legislative efforts that aim to reduce toxic exposures, fight climate change, and hold corporate polluters accountable to protect people, especially children and overburdened communities, from harmful pollutants.

Our work isn't just about passing laws; it's about creating lasting, positive change that will safeguard future generations. This year, we're focused on several legislative initiatives that will make Oregon continue to stand out as an environmental leader.

From tackling air pollution, to reducing chemical exposures in schools, and leading the charge on climate solutions, we're committed to policies that protect both our health and our planet!

**We are excited to share our 2025 legislative initiatives with you.** These proposed laws reflect the urgent need to address critical climate and environmental problems.

**But we can't do it alone!** We need your support to make sure these bills pass and create real change. We're counting on you to get involved, speak up for a healthy future and submit your testimony to count for the official record! Check out some of the policies we're working on during the next legislative session to secure a toxic-free future for all Oregonians . . .





# »» OUR 2025 LEGISLATIVE COMMITMENTS ««

CHAMPIONING CHANGE FOR A TOXIC-FREE FUTURE IN EVERY POLICY DECISION!

## PLANNING FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

As co-leaders of the **Planning for Healthy Communities Act**, we're working to **strengthen Oregon's land use laws** by requiring robust health and environmental justice protections near homes, schools, and care facilities to curb negative impacts of industrial developments. By tackling air pollution, urban heat, and traffic risks head-on, this policy ensures that approval of permits to construct industrial facilities doesn't come by sacrificing community health! This legislation, modeled after our **Public Health Overlay Zone** in Eugene, was the first development code to prioritize community health in zoning decisions.

**Chief Sponsors: Senator Manning, Representative Tran**



## PROTECTING KIDS FROM TOXIC EXPOSURES



We're coming back to the legislature to make schools safer with a new bill to improve pest management practices. This bill mandates that Oregon schools update their **Integrated Pest Management plans** every five years, include school gardens, and make plans accessible online.

Our approach reduces chemical use by favoring non-chemical methods and a protocol before using any low-impact pesticides. This isn't just about pest control, it's about creating sustainable, toxic-free learning environments where students can thrive!

**Chief Sponsor: Representative Hudson**



## PROTECTING POLLINATORS FROM PESTICIDES



Nearly a decade after introducing legislation to restrict neonicotinoid pesticides and helping establish the Oregon Bee Lab, we continue to carry forward the fight to protect Oregon's pollinators! We are leading a strong coalition of groups that want to see Oregon become the next state to protect pollinators, birds and fish by making sure only trained, licensed users can purchase and apply these highly systemic pesticides. Our new bill will **limit bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides** to licensed users, keeping them off store shelves and out of residential landscapes. This legislation positions Oregon to join 11 other states in **safeguarding pollinators, birds, and aquatic life from harmful pesticides!**

**Chief Sponsor: Representative Hudson**

## CUTTING METHANE EMISSIONS FOR CLEANER AIR

As climate activists, we know that addressing methane leaks at landfills is crucial to combating climate change. Methane leaks from landfills are a major climate threat, yet **private operators have used legal loopholes to omit 50% of landfill surface areas from monitoring**, claiming these zones are unsafe for workers, as opposed to publicly operated landfills, which only exclude 10%. **Our new bill closes these gaps, mandating GIS/drone technology to monitor all areas** and requiring emissions data to be directly reported to the DEQ, ensuring public accountability. This forward-looking legislation is a game-changer for Oregon's climate action, holding landfill operators accountable and pushing for cleaner air in our communities. Once passed, Oregon will position itself as a state **leading the way for greenhouse gas reductions!**

**Chief Sponsor: Senator Gelser Blouin**



## HYDROGEN IS NOT A CLIMATE SOLUTION

We are joining with other nonprofits to push for state laws that protect communities from corporate practices to impose hydrogen-blending in homes without notification. Hydrogen mixing is neither low-carbon nor safe; it increases pipe vulnerability, exposing people to harmful chemicals in their homes. **It's time to close a critical loophole in Oregon's energy provider regulations!** Our new coalition-backed bill requires energy companies to submit project plans for rigorous Public Utility Commission review, demanding transparency and safety over fossil fuel-driven solutions!

**Chief Sponsor: Senator-elect Pham**





# 25 YEARS OF EMPOWERING ACTION!



2000

Beyond Toxics was founded in Eugene to **protect public health and the environment** from toxic chemicals in air, soil, and water.



2001

Launched the **Safe Public Spaces** project, pioneering protections for kids from pesticide exposure in public areas across Oregon.



2002

Conducted the **first industrial air pollution sampling for heavy metals in Portland neighborhoods**, advocating for healthier communities.



2016

Hosted **Oregon's first Environmental Justice Forum for Farm and Forest workers** to share their experience with state-level decision-makers.



2015

Championed HB 3549, **establishing aerial spray buffers around homes and schools**, regulating timber herbicide spraying to protect rural communities.



2014

Eugene became America's Most Bee-Friendly City by **banning neonicotinoid pesticides**, with Portland and Milwaukie following suit.



2018

Led the fight to pass modernized State IPM Laws requiring **safer pest management in all public universities and state agencies**,



2020

Celebrated the **chlorpyrifos ban** and SB 1602 - **Private Forest Accord**, providing new protections for Oregon's private forests.



2021

Led the **Environmental Justice Pathways Summit**, launched **Rise As Leaders**, and championed SCR 17, **establishing Oregon's environmental justice framework**.



Celebrating 25 years of victories, we remain invested in creating a more equitable Oregon to combat climate change and pollution now and into the future!



2005

Raised awareness of toxic vapor exposure at gas stations, leading to a **"No Top Off"** law reducing benzene and toluene emissions.



2007

Secured a **Field Burning Ban** (SB 528), improving air quality in Oregon's Willamette Valley by **eliminating a major source of pollution**.



2009

Oregon passed the School IPM Law (SB 637), **requiring schools to use non-chemical pest control methods**, creating safer learning environments.



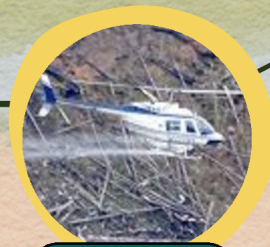
2013

Helped block the Millennium Coal Export project through Eugene, **preventing coal transport through the city's neighborhoods**.



2012

Led Oregon's **first Environmental Justice Bus Tour**, uniting EPA, DEQ, and local leaders to address pollution in West Eugene.



2010

Organized communities statewide to **fight helicopter herbicide spraying**, initiating health assessments and mapping impact zones.



2022

Achieved the **closure of J.H. Baxter**, a major West Eugene polluter, and **halted NW Natural's hydrogen blending project** for safer communities.



2023

Advanced Public Health Development Standards in land use decisions, **embedding health protections in land use and zoning policies**.



2024

Became the first Oregon group to **challenge fuel rail-to-semi-truck transfer stations** on environmental justice and improper land use grounds.





# HARNESSING NATURE TO FIGHT POLLUTION:

## THE POWER OF MOSS MONITORING

Nearly 10 years ago, we accepted an invitation from communities living downwind of Covanta Marion, Oregon's only municipal and medical waste incinerator, to help them hold this large polluter accountable. Their primary concern was the likely risk of human exposure to hazardous air toxics, particularly dioxins and mercury, lead, cadmium and arsenic.

### Uncovering the Pollution

In response, we led an active coalition and took action to draw attention to the problem of incinerator emissions. After requesting DEQ's assistance to conduct air monitoring, and getting no for an answer, we hired a professional environmental monitoring firm to test local moss for deposits of heavy metals. Our pilot study indeed showed that samples taken nearer to the incinerator property had exponentially greater concentrations of heavy metals. Our research grabbed the attention of the U.S. Forest Service scientists who then embarked on a larger study.

### A Legislative Victory: SB 488

This groundbreaking research supported the passage of Oregon's SB 488, our signature legislation in 2023. The new law requires incinerators to continuously monitor 15 pollutants identified in our moss study. This law positions Oregon as the first state to regulate emissions from municipal waste incinerators, providing communities with critical pollution data.

### Moss Monitoring Breakthrough

Published in the scientific journal *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* (Nov. 2024), the USFS study confirmed that **moss effectively detects airborne pollutants from incinerators**. Moss near the Oregon incinerator showed elevated levels of mercury, lead, and cadmium up to six miles away. Dr. Sarah Jovan, the lead researcher, noted, "Suddenly you can see something that's normally invisible."

### Charting a Path Forward

Strong legislation backed by scientific research is a powerful tool for advocacy and enables people to access timely pollution information and demand accountability. Together, these advancements bring us closer to revolutionizing pollution monitoring, setting a standard for healthier air across Oregon and beyond!





# HYDROGEN BLENDING

## YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

### OUR PUSH FOR TRANSPARENCY

In an effort to keep people hooked on fossil fuel appliances, Oregon's largest gas supplier, NW Natural, is launching projects to blend hydrogen into residential gas lines. NW Natural is targeting Portland after we stopped a similar attempt in Eugene, thanks to strong community opposition. We are now working with climate justice groups to support legislation that would ensure public notification and oversight from the Oregon Public Utility Commission before similar projects are implemented.

Our objective is to guarantee the public's Right to Know before polluters expose us to toxic chemicals that may impact our lives.

Here's what you need to know about new legislative efforts to prevent risky experimental hydrogen blending practices in Oregon.

### THE RISKS OF HYDROGEN BLENDING

Mixing hydrogen into natural gas pipelines presents significant safety concerns. Hydrogen can make pipes brittle, raising the risk of leaks and potential explosions. Additionally, hydrogen-methane blends for home heating and cooking increases exposure to nitrogen oxides (NOx), which can trigger asthma and respiratory infections. This blend also raises the risk of cancer-causing compounds like benzene, xylene, and toluene, which could compromise indoor air quality.

### HYDROGEN BLENDING IS NOT A CLIMATE SOLUTION

After Beyond Toxics successfully stopped a hydrogen-methane blending project proposed by NW Natural in Eugene in 2022, we are joining with other nonprofits to ensure there are state laws protecting communities from predatory corporate tactics to force hydrogen-blending in homes without notification. Hydrogen mixing is neither low-carbon nor safe; it increases the risk of leaking pipes and explosions, exposing people to methane's harmful chemicals in their homes.

### YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW

Oregonians deserve transparency. Our homes shouldn't be testing grounds for risky, secretive, and unproven projects that compromise our health and safety. Beyond Toxics has joined other environmental groups in calling for science-based, health-centered legislation to keep dangerous hydrogen blends out of residential pipelines.

**Oregon must prioritize real renewable energy solutions** and hold corporations like NW Natural accountable for genuine climate action, not greenwashing tactics!

Stay tuned for updates and opportunities to support this critical legislation in the coming session!



# JUSTICE FOR TRAINSONG

## The power of community organizing

### *Dharmika's Story*

For two and a half decades, Dharmika Henshel has lived in the Trainsong neighborhood. She raised her son there, where she was concerned about her fruit trees being contaminated by a toxic plume underground from the nearby Union Pacific Railroad operations. For years, she and other residents in this quaint and close-knit neighborhood have been bombarded with toxic fumes from J.H. Baxter, noisy train traffic at all hours, and most recently low-frequency noise and vibrations from Zip-O-Logs mill. This community actively faces environmental harms caused by nearby manufacturers and industry. Driven by necessity, Dharmika has long fought against industrial pollution to protect her neighborhood from big industrial polluters.

Now, the community faces what Dharmika calls an “existential threat.” USD Clean Fuels, a Texas-based company, has plans to build a biofuels transloading station, sending more railcars and tanker trucks through the neighborhood. The list of concerns is long, but most threatening is the risk of explosion as highly flammable fuels are brought through the neighborhood. Residents are worried about toxic emissions, air and noise pollution, and traffic hazards as families live just across the street from the proposed facility. “To have explosive truck traffic up and down our little street and that they want to operate all day and night, it just doesn’t make sense,” Dharmika said.



Above: Dharmika exposing the disproportionate toxic pollution in Trainsong at a tour stop during our Environmental Justice Solidarity Bus Tour.



*People are riled up... I haven't really ever seen this amount of proactive activism in my neighborhood.*

*~ Dharmika Henshell*

With this renewed sense of passion and action, Dharmika is hopeful that we can stop USD Clean Fuels from coming into Trainsong.

On September 30th, with the help of the Crag Law Center, we filed a petition with the State Land Use Board of Appeals to demand that the City of Eugene withdraw its zoning decision. **Our challenge resulted in the City withdrawing its permission for the project on October 11th.** The City now has until January 10th to make a final decision to withdraw, modify, or re-approve the USD fuel transfer project. We are keeping the legal and grassroots pressure strong, as we guide the City to use their authority to deny this public health menace!

### **Pollution Policy Update:**

The plight of pollution-burdened neighborhoods is a pressing problem for communities throughout Oregon. That is why Beyond Toxics is actively fighting for policy reform that builds public health standards into our land use and zoning laws.

Locally, we are urging the adoption of the Eugene **Public Health Development Standards**. At the state level, we are advocating for the passage of the **Planning for Healthy Communities Act**. Both policies will embed environmental health and justice principles in Oregon's land use laws.





# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

After a quarter of a century of advocacy and achievement, Beyond Toxics has proven time and time again that we are ready to stand up to protect Oregonians from environmental injustices. Our unique approach brings together local grassroots organizing and awareness-raising with action to pass lasting, protective laws that deliver meaningful change. We have the experience to accomplish those goals, but our work depends on support from our members like you.

**We need your help to raise \$100,000** by the end of the year to ensure that we can show up at the 2025 Oregon Legislature with the resources in place to win meaningful policy change! We are determined to pass strong regulations to protect Oregonians from climate change, pesticides and pollution, but we can't do it without you. Your membership is crucial to our mission.

For 25 years, our team has led the fight for environmental justice, protecting Oregonians from pollution, unsafe chemicals, and climate impacts. As we prepare for the 2025 legislative session, our commitment to clean air, safe schools, and equitable energy access is stronger than ever – but we need your help to make it happen!

With your support, we'll advance critical legislation that:

- »» **Protects communities from harmful pollution.** We're tackling the worst polluters by building environmental health and justice into our regulatory systems.
- »» **Secures clean energy solutions and climate justice.** We work directly with overburdened communities to thrive during weather extremes and wildfire smoke.
- »» **Ban bee-killing pesticides and protect children's health.** We are fighting to strengthen pesticides laws and make Oregon a leader in pesticide restrictions..

Thanks to our Board of Directors and a group of generous donors, **every dollar you donate will be matched to reach our goal of \$100,000.** Whether as a first-time donor or as a loyal partner, consider doubling your donation today to help shape a healthier, more equitable future. Your donation now will ensure that together, we continue to bring future victories that build off our 25 year legacy. We are incredibly grateful for your support.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT

- »» **GIFT A MEANINGFUL YEAR-END DONATION**
- »» **DONATE MONTHLY**
- »» **GIVE APPRECIATED STOCK**
- »» **CONTRIBUTE THROUGH YOUR IRA**  
*(For those 70 1/2 & older)*



SCAN ME



Thank you so much for your generous support!

Sincerely,  
The Beyond Toxics Team



make a donation online at [www.beyondtoxics.org](http://www.beyondtoxics.org)





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# HOLIDAY PARTY

TO CELEBRATE *25 years* OF ADVOCACY!

ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13TH AT 5PM  
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