

## **The Ashland Conservation Commission UPDATE**

**By Risa Buck, longtime Conservation Commissioner & now Conservation & Climate Outreach Commissioner**

The Ashland Conservation Commission has served the city since its inception thanks to the forward thinking of a collaborative governmental, public sector and citizen effort. It was birthed as the Recycling Task Force in 1993 and was the driving force behind the Water Street Recycling Center that continues to serve the Ashland community and beyond. In 1995 this organization formalized and became the Ashland Conservation Commission with leadership from then mayor Cathy Golden Shaw, City Councilors Ken Hagen, Carole Wheeldon, Susan Reid, City staff Dick Wanderscheid, Ashland Sanitary's former co-owner, Russ Chapman (now Recology Ashland) and others. This month's "Conservation Corner" looks back at the last almost 25 years and 50 citizen commissioners, staff and city council liaisons, who have steadily tackled a number of environmental challenges and issues. (see ad with the comprehensive list of participants).

The Ashland Conservation Commission has recently earned a new title as part of a multi-year process that helped create the Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP). CEAP was born from the hard work of an Ad-Hoc Citizen committee artfully guided by City Councilor Rich Rosenthal. It was approved unanimously by the City Council in the spring of 2017. CEAP's goals include a comprehensive list of actions to pursue ([www.ashland.or.us/climateplan](http://www.ashland.or.us/climateplan)).

To oversee the success of this commitment, it funded a new City staff position, Climate & Energy Analyst. Stu Green is diligently leading the charge to guide the City and community to accomplish these goals. The February "Conservation Corner" article will focus on the new Climate Policy Commission (CPC). During this process, it became apparent that the mission of the original Conservation Commission (CC) needed to be updated to closely align with a much-needed element of the CEAP that fit the history and efforts of the Commission.

Historically, the Conservation Commission's successes have included piloting new projects, educating the community through classes, attending and supporting community events like Earth Day and the Bear Creek Salmon Festival. The CC is now formally called the Conservation and Climate Outreach Commission (CCOC). Our community and Council now have two formal Commissions specifically charged with moving forward policies, projects, education and outreach in support of implementing the CEAP.

As we mark the somewhat subtle but important change in scope and charge of the CC, it is worth noting some of the important work dedicated members have accomplished in nearly 25 years of supporting the community in conservation, sustainability and climate action. Some of the projects and recommendations the Conservation Commission has been involved with over the years includes:

- 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade floats promoting conservation and recycling
- Conservationist of the Year Awards
- The Earth Bowl – Sustainability/Climate centric Middle School academic competition
- Sponsorship and participation in Rogue Valley Earth Day
- Support and participation in the Bear Creek Salmon Festival
- Development of a local Green Business Program
- Annual composting classes for residents
- Research and recommendation for the Plastic Bag Ban
- Downtown collection baskets (Bottles & Cans)
- Cigarette butt collection containers (removed with downtown smoking ban)

- Storm Drain Marking efforts (No Dumping – Drains to Stream)
- Developed and hosted Graywater Workshop for contractors and residents
- Ongoing Laundry to Landscape and rainwater catchment tours and classes
- Green & Solar Home Tours
- Monthly articles in Conservation Corner (see [www.ashland.or.us/conservationcorner](http://www.ashland.or.us/conservationcorner) for the full article library)

Stay tuned in 2020 for:

- Expanded climate action educational materials, classes and presentation opportunities
- Rogue to Go – DEQ grant funded project partnering with local businesses to bring a reusable food container program to the community.
- Research adoption of city-wide policy to eliminate single use items that keep our trash receptacles full.
- Air quality and idling offer examples of ongoing challenges we will tackle with the CPC toward carbon reduction.

The reason the **Conservation & Climate Outreach Commission** continues to be relevant is because we are one of the links to update, communicate, and inform the community on climate policies, programs and actions that can be taken to support our community in pushing the climate action needle forward locally and beyond. To achieve these critical goals, it requires something from each of us. Stay tuned and join in!

# ASHLAND CONSERVATION COMMISSIONERS SINCE 1996

**Thank you for your dedicated service to our  
community and environment.**

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Thomas Beam  
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Carol Chamber  
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Shel Silverberg  
Mort Smith  
David Sommer  
Kari Tuck  
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## **CURRENT CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE OUTREACH COMMISSIONERS**

**Risa Buck • Larry Cooper • Marni Koopman  
James McGinnis • Marion Moore  
Jamie Rosenthal • Bryan Sohl • Rebecca Walker**