

FALL 2012



Rose Foundation

Supporting grassroots initiatives to inspire community action
for environmental protection and public health.

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New Grantmaking Fund to Protect Puget Sound

By Tim Little



"We have a big settlement pending. I can't tell you how much money we are talking about yet, it's still confidential. But it's going to be a lot – are you interested?"

Executive Directors dream about getting calls like this. At the Rose Foundation, sometimes it actually happens! No matter the caller, the story is similar: A company was charged with breaking the law – either through ignorance, negligence, or as part of a calculated business risk, and a solution was negotiated. First and foremost, an agreement was reached to stop the pollution source or consumer threat. Second (and this is why they are calling Rose), the parties to the lawsuit have agreed to make a donation towards repairing some of the damage, or to lessen future threats to the environment or community. This is when we get the phone call.


This call was about a legal settlement between the Seattle-based Puget Soundkeeper Alliance and BNSF Railroad. The lawsuit was related to pollution runoff from the BNSF Balmer Yard facility in Seattle into Elliott Bay and Puget Sound. We used the money to create the *Puget Sound Stewardship and Mitigation Fund* to support community-based efforts to protect or improve the water quality of Puget Sound. This area is identified by state and federal agencies as providing critical habitat or migration routes for a variety of species, including threatened Chinook salmon, sixgill shark, orca whales, harbor seals, seabirds and more.

\$1.5 Million for Puget Sound

Our newest grants fund is a whopper! In fact, the \$1.5 million settlement is one of the largest ever in a citizen enforcement action involving stormwater discharges. But

New Voices Are Rising Summer Advocacy Institute


This summer, New Voices Are Rising brought Oakland students together to learn about environmental sustainability and community advocacy. Students testified at two hearings: a City Council committee meeting on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Proposal, and an Environmental Protection Agency hearing on tougher soot standards for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Pollution. Both occasions gave our students the opportunity to practice their newly honed skills, and to become more effective advocates for the kind of community they want to live in.



Johnson Vo testifies before the Oakland City Council in favor of the BRT proposal.



What does an ideal community look like? Our students illustrate their vision of an ideal community.



Left: Students testify before US EPA staff about the impact of particulate pollution in their neighborhoods.

From New Voices Student to Teacher

By Christina McGhee

I am an alumna of the Rose Foundation's 2007 New Voices Are Rising Summer program, now majoring in Environmental Studies at UC Santa Cruz with a focus on water issues, and I have a passion for teaching.

I was excited when Jill Ratner asked me to return to the 2012 New Voices Are Rising Summer Advocacy Institute as a peer leader. While a New Voices student, I had learned about the power of community voice and advocacy.

Now as the peer leader, I have learned what it means to create a space for students to discover that power for themselves. I organized lesson plans, facilitated student discussions and reflected with staff about our work. This helped me understand the inner workings of the program better. I even created my own water lesson this year.

As an ambitious teacher-in-training, I was excited to apply the techniques I learned at college. We started with "Words on the Wall" – students wrote their thoughts about rivers, water conservation and environmental stressors on paper hung on the walls. Then we divided into two groups, with each group given a packet of pictures to arrange in answering: "How does a drop of water get to your tap?"

While students arranged pictures of clouds, snow, mountains, a smiling sun, rivers, reservoirs, holding tanks, pipes, filtration plants, more pipes and a faucet, I was thrilled that the activity helped me gauge their prior knowledge without having to ask each student long questions.

Soon it was lunchtime, and I realized that hungry students (and their teacher!) needed a break. The students flew out of the room to eat while I sighed in relief. We wouldn't finish the words on the wall activity, but we did cover the major discussion points, which made me happy.

After lunch, I set up experiment stations to explore how water is filtered before it reaches the tap. I mixed potting soil into tap water to give the students dirty water to purify. There were water bottles

to shake for aeration, alum to stir into the dirty water to promote coagulation, a clock to time sedimentation, and aquarium stones and two grades of sand for filtration.

Students paired up at the tables. The room was very quiet except for hushed comments between partners about their work. I thought this would be the loudest part of the day since students had the most autonomy. I was surprised that they were quiet and focused when they were free to complete this hands-on experiment without discussion.

After everyone finished the experiment, they combined their filtered water into a single measuring cup and their filter material into a large bowl. Combined, the measuring cup held less than 2 cups of filtered water, and the bowl had several cups of "waste". We discussed how much of their energy was used through this system to produce less than 2 cups of filtered water, and what that result might imply for sustainable water use in California.

Overall it was a great experience that has given me a lot to think about as a future teacher. I learned that I am too ambitious in my lesson plans! Next time I'll plan more time between activities for students to reflect, and for me to set up the next activity. The students had fun with the water scramble and the experiment. I learned that students engage more with lessons if there are activities where they can move around. Writing and other stationary activities for students are important – but there has to be a balance.

Working with New Voices is where I first got my inspiration to be a teacher. It was a wonderful experience to come back this summer to practice and build my teaching skills.



Jasmine Amons started working as an intern at the Rose Foundation in the summer of 2009, right after graduation from high school. Most of her initial work involved clerical tasks such as copying and filing. But she quickly took on more projects and responsibilities in the office. This summer, she joined our staff full-time as Grants and Development Assistant.

"I felt like this was a natural progression. The longer I worked here, I was getting more responsibilities. When I was asked to be on staff, it seemed like a natural step."

Jasmine supports both our grants programs and fundraising activities, and has been an integral part of our two newest grantmaking initiatives – the Consumer Financial Education and Puget Sound Watershed funds. Much of her work is to process grant proposals and to work with applicants to submit a complete application. Often, this means learning about new issues. While researching groups working on consumer financial education, Jasmine said, "I found I needed to educate myself on what consumer financial education meant so that I could find the right groups to send our grant announcement to."

Jasmine has been an asset to the Rose Foundation as an intern, and we are happy to have her as our newest staff member.

Protect Puget Sound (continued from front page)

the size of the new Puget Fund is commensurate to the threat. According to the Washington State Department of Ecology, polluted stormwater runoff is the number-one source of toxic loading in the Sound. Heavy metals, especially copper, are particularly dangerous to the survival of salmon species, which are highly valued culturally and economically in the Puget Sound Region. Industrial stormwater can also contain toxic levels of other heavy metals, such as zinc and lead, as well as oils and suspended solids.

After the shock of the call wore off, the honor started to set in. We know that grassroots activists in California are familiar with our programs to reinvest pollution mitigation payments into local communities and watersheds. And due to the complicated accounting and reporting requirements, we know most other foundations don't administer many settlements. But we didn't know that our work with settlements had attracted notice outside of California.

Part of the honor is the size of the fund – and the initial award has already been supplemented by two more Soundkeeper settlements! We are humbled that the leading citizen enforcement group in Washington State would entrust us with such a large settlement. We're keenly aware that there is a lot we need to learn about the Puget Sound ecosystem and the people who live there. To ensure that the Fund is grounded in the values and knowledge of the local community, we recruited a Puget Sound-based funding advisory board to guide our grant decisions.

“Call the Rose Foundation – It's What They Do.”

But the other part of the honor is how the Puget Soundkeeper found us. When they told their Seattle-area funders that they had solved a serious local stormwater problem and secured a record settlement, the folks at the Northwest

Fund for the Environment and Russell Family Fund both, independently, told the Soundkeeper the same thing: the BNSF settlement was larger than all of the Soundkeeper's past mitigation funds combined. The Seattle funders feared that administering the money and the resulting projects might distract the Soundkeeper from their core mission. They said, “Call the Rose Foundation and ask them to set up a new grants fund, it's what they do.”



We are now in the middle of our first-ever Puget Sound grant cycle. In order to penetrate deeply into the community and make effective grants, we've divided the money into two pots:

Watershed Grants are geared towards larger groups who are prepared to submit a detailed proposal and administer a significant grant. By the end of 2012, we plan to award more than \$500,000 in Watershed Grants supporting activities like water quality monitoring and testing, green infrastructure projects, shoreline or riparian restoration and other hands-on stewardship activities.

Grassroots Grants are intended for smaller groups who may be mostly volunteer driven, and may not have much experience in applying for foundation grants. Grassroots Grants will range from \$1,000–\$10,000. After receiving a grant, all Grassroots grantees will become eligible for organizational capacity-building training including accounting, fundraising, planning, communications and more. This training will help them build their groups and become stronger even after the grant dollars have been spent.

For more information about the Puget Sound Stewardship and Mitigation Fund, including application instructions and deadlines, please visit www.rosefdn.org.

Helping to Repair the Harm

Every once in a while, we get a phone call from an organization like San Francisco Baykeeper, or another pollution watchdog or consumer protection nonprofit like the Sierra Club, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance and the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, asking if we can be the recipient of their negotiated settlement.

The focus of these settlements is to solve a pollution problem, a violation of peoples' constitutional right to privacy, or something else that harmed people or the environment. But often there is also a chance to reinvest a mitigation payment back into the communities that suffered the harm. This is where Rose comes in.

When a settlement comes to us under the Clean Water Act, we are required to submit reports to the US Department of Justice, the courts and the parties to the lawsuit detailing how we've spent every dollar entrusted to us. This requires extensive tracking from both accounting and grants administration perspectives. In fact, due to the complicated accounting and reporting requirements required, many foundations don't accept these kinds of settlements.

But at the Rose Foundation, it's our specialty! Since we started the program, we've administered more than 300 settlements, enabling over \$20 million in community grants. And because of our solid track record of handling environmental settlements, the courts have been confident enough in our work to name the Rose Foundation as administrator of several large consumer-related class action settlements too. In fact, last year California Lawyer magazine complimented Rose for our “transparency and no-nonsense approach to the competition for funds.”

