



October 6, 2022

The Russell Family Foundation (TRFF) launched the Puyallup Watershed Initiative (Initiative) with the goal of improving the health and environmental conditions of the Puyallup Watershed and its communities. The Initiative has been the largest placed-based program for TRFF, and a funding commitment of the foundation since the Initiative was formally launched in 2013.

We are deeply grateful for the work and contributions of everyone who participated in the Initiative, as their commitment allowed it to become an independent, community-led organization in 2018. We are also very appreciative to the individuals who shared their insights, reflections, and recommendations for the report we attached – A Retrospective Report of the Puyallup Watershed Initiative.

The report, completed by the firm we hired, Business Government Community Connections, documents the evolution of the Initiative and highlights many of the successes, challenges, and lessons learned along the way. It describes the work that occurred in each of the three phases of the Initiative: Phase 1 Research and Relationship Building (2009-2012); Phase 2 Implementation and Capacity Building (2013-2017), and Phase 3 Managing a Nonprofit (2018-2021). The report also shares hindsight reflections of individuals who were interviewed and features some of your comments, and significant achievements that the Communities of Interest (COIs) experienced in the leveraging chart.

The report underscores the ambitious journey we all took together. One of the individuals we interviewed said, “It is always important to take the time to reflect on the past and to see how and where our work made a difference, and to take and share what we learned along the way with others.”

TRFF agrees and again wants to thank all the community members who worked to collectively demonstrate the power, and importance of community-led efforts. Many more people are now engaged in environmental efforts because of your energy and commitment. The legacy of your work has and will continue to benefit the community for years to come.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Simpson  
Chief Executive Officer

Fabiola Greenawalt  
Program Officer

# PUYALLUP WATERSHED INITIATIVE

## (REFERRED TO AS INITIATIVE)

### Historical Timeline 2009-2021



## PHASE 1 RESEARCH AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

### 2009 - 2012

- TRFF listened and learned
- TRFF selected the Puyallup Watershed
- TRFF launched the Watershed Advisory Group
- The idea of Communities of Interest (COIs) took hold
- TRFF believed that the community must lead the way
- TRFF made a \$10 million, 10-year commitment

## PHASE 2 IMPLEMENTATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

### 2013

- **Bonneville Environmental Foundation received a total of \$756,877 for operations, including capacity building grants for COIs**
- The Initiative's first watershed event was held
- Year 1 TRFF funding to launch and form COIs
- TRFF and BEF were backbone organizations for the Initiative
- COIs began to build their proposals for funding support from TRFF
- The proposal development process was time consuming



## 2014

- **TRFF awarded \$1,251,230 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 2 TRFF funding – 1st round funds to COIs for activities in 2015 (primarily)
- TRFF, BEF and GTCF were backbone organizations for the Initiative
- GTCF became the fiscal lead for COI funding
- Second Initiative event was held
- Six COIs were funded/or in the process of being funded
- Active Transportation first COI to leverage grant resource

## 2015

- **TRFF awarded \$1,736,032 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 3 TRFF funding – 2nd round funds to COIs for activities in 2016
- TRFF, BEF and GTCF were Initiative backbone organizations
- BEF contract ended
- Grand convening/2-day Initiative conference hosted by TRFF at the Washington State History Museum
- Six COI groups were launched and building capacity

## 2016

- **TRFF awarded \$715,393 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 4 TRFF funding – 3rd round funds to COIs for activities in 2017
- TRFF, GTCF and Contractors were the backbone organizations
- Process to determine organizational structure underway
- Selection for Transitional Board completed

## 2017

- **TRFF awarded \$1,634,722 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 5 TRFF Funding – 4th round to COIs for activities in 2018
- TRFF, GTCF and Contractors were backbone organizations
- Strategies to build a 501(c)(3) underway
- Strategies to select a permanent board underway
- Transitional Board selected a nominating committee
- Initiative prepared its first general operating request to TRFF
- Initiative nonprofit launched
- Initiative Interim Director hired
- Initiative Community Board selected



## PHASE 3 MANAGING A NONPROFIT

### 2018

- **TRFF awarded \$2,554,455 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 6 TRFF Funding – 5th round to COIs for activities in 2019
- Alaska Sustainable Southeast Partnership Trip
- Active Transit COI Scan Design Foundation and Trip to Denmark
- Initiative now owned by community
- November Community Event celebrating 1st year as nonprofit
- 2nd Initiative general operating request to TRFF (for 2019)
- Initiative Executive Director hired

### 2019

- **TRFF awarded \$1,585,000 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 7 TRFF Funding – 6th round to COIs for activities in 2020
- The Initiative's working sessions identified underlying tensions interfering with staff/board cohesion
- 3rd Initiative general operating grant request to TRFF (for 2020)
- The Initiative continued to operate as a community owned entity
- On 11/27/19 Initiative asked to prepare Strategic Plan, Fundraising Plan and Fund Disbursement Plan by the end of 2020

### 2020

- **Carry over funds used to support 7th round to COIs for activities in 2021**
- Initiative operating as a community-owned entity
- Executive Director resigns
- Community Board appoints co-interim Executive Directors
- TRFF assessment revealed Initiative and COIs faced significant challenges
- TRFF board voted to culminate the Initiative's funding

### 2021

- **TRFF awarded final grant amount of \$600,000 to Initiative**
- The Initiative challenges determined to be too great to sustain 501(c)(3)
- Initiative winds down operations as a 501(c)(3)
- COIs use \$600,000 for operating 2022 projects and dissolution costs

# A RETROSPECTIVE REPORT OF THE PUYALLUP WATERSHED INITIATIVE

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2022



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2022

## Retrospective Evaluation of the Puyallup Watershed Initiative

### SECTION 1. Report Introduction

#### Report Purpose

This report describes the evolution and lessons learned from the Puyallup Watershed Initiative (Initiative), which is The Russell Family Foundation's (TRFF) largest place-based program to date. The overarching goal of the Initiative was to improve and protect water quality and overall resilience in the Puyallup Watershed region, with the realization that the watershed community must lead the way. TRFF helped conceptualize and provide early staff support for the Initiative and invested \$11.8 million between 2012 and 2021. This report explores the efforts of Communities of Interest (COIs), comprised of people and organizations who shared concerns in similar areas, to build their own vision and plan for creating a resilient, healthy system. The journey has been rewarding and challenging. The learning and legacy of this investment is great and still benefiting the watershed community. TRFF is hoping to use and share the insights shared in this report with others undertaking regional, community centered change efforts.

#### Report Approach

Information sources for this report included:

- Interviews with 30 persons, including current and former TRFF Staff and Board members, Transitional and Permanent Initiative Board members, COI participants, fiscal management, strategic planning, and transition planning contractors engaged in the Initiative.
- The review of over 300 documents, including TRFF board meeting updates, white papers, developmental evaluations, news articles, presentations, consultant reports and other supplementary materials.

The information was documented and entered into a qualitative database to identify key actions, decision points, and pivotal events or activities that influenced the evolution of the Initiative, interviewees were informed that their names would not be used in the report.

The report looks deliberately at the work of the COIs to implement strategies, as well as the operations side of the Initiative – to show how these two parts of the work were unfolding during each phase of the Initiative.



## Report Findings

A review of the data reveals that:

- Many factors influenced the reasons people joined COIs, and their level and type of engagement. Some people joined because they worked in environmental organizations during the day, and the Initiative was an intentional or natural extension of their work. Others were newcomers to environmental projects and wanted to explore a new area and had an interest in being part of a movement. Yet others heard about the Initiative from a friend or colleague or were inspired after they attended an Initiative sponsored activity or event. Some community members could only dedicate limited time to the COI work, or be sporadically engaged. All were valuable contributors. Even those community members who were less involved, were conduits to, and messengers of the Initiative to others. The Active Transportation COI used a pool analogy to explain the depths of involvement that people can have. They said their approach worked well. They said, “Folks can dip their toes in by signing up for a newsletter, stay in the shallow end by attending events, go deeper by joining a strategy team, or dive right into the full COI membership.”
- The Initiative offered community members an opportunity to come together in a unique way where they could forge a common vision, shared goals, and plans. The Initiative opened the door for people who shared a passion for certain environmental topics to see themselves as environmental stewards. The Initiative also promoted community-led decision making, and the power of collective thinking and acting.

- The COIs efforts to reach out to the community were wide ranging. For example, the Active Transportation COI engaged 40 people in a pedestrian safety design workshop, and hundreds of community members walked the seven miles of waterfront for the Downtown to Defiance event. The Environmental Education COI trained 110 educators and collaborated with five school districts (Tacoma, Puyallup, Fife, Bethel, and Federal Way) to improve environmental education. The Forest COI informed 9,300 watershed households about tree planting, and as a result, 1,500 of those people requested tree coupons.
- Perhaps one of the most significant legacies of the Initiative will be the promotion of the importance and necessity of integrating equity values and practices into current and future watershed community environmental efforts. COI participants saw their role as a catalyst for ensuring that equity values and processes were embedded in environmental projects.

Furthermore, the data shared by COIs increased awareness of the disproportionate effect of environmental problems on communities furthest from opportunity. The work of COIs, inspired heavily by the Just and Healthy Food System COI, also underscored the importance of integrating multicultural engagement strategies, and reaching out to immigrant and non-western communities around racism and colorism. This work compelled COIs to strive to think ahead, and preemptively anticipate and address race equity issues before they arise. In addition, this approach heightened awareness of how important it is for people to see the benefits of taking time to identify their needs. The Initiative also increased awareness of the necessity to invest in trans-

portation, childcare and translation materials which embedded an equity lens in order to engage diverse populations.

- It took a great deal of time for the Initiative to plan and reach consensus on both their individual COI plans and their broader efforts to become a nonprofit. These challenges raised awareness of the time constraints many COI participants faced, and the somewhat competing demands associated with coordinating the work of COIs. On the one hand COIs needed to create an environment where people could exchange ideas and feel free to express different viewpoints. At the same time, they needed to adhere to fairly rigid protocols for reaching decisions, planning, and reporting. Also, because COIs were open entry, these values and protocols needed to be reiterated frequently, and there was often a learning curve or an adjustment phase for newcomers.
- COIs also learned that their workplans often took more time to implement than expected. In particular, they often underestimated the time it took to do outreach, and to get volunteers, and people, who are truly members of the public involved. They also saw that it was challenging to convey how the actions, or inactions of people affect a region in a way that does not blame people, but rather appeals to values like wellness, stewardship, sustainability, and cooperation. In addition, COIs reported that policy changes which institutionalized the values of COIs were also slow to achieve, but worthwhile to pursue. COIs which had a strong coalition of allies, such as the Active Transportation COI, were the best positioned to reassess, regroup, and continue to move their agendas.

- It was difficult to retain the interest of some COI participants if the COI was too focused on project planning and report writing, and less on project activities. Funder efforts to streamline these processes were determined to be needed in order to expedite the work, and maintain the energy and enthusiasm of participants.
  - COIs did not keep consistent data on the precise reasons for people joining, leaving, or returning to the Initiative. This information would have been helpful to gather throughout the Initiative for recruitment and improvement purposes. Also, although it is well-known that some COI members have been hired to environmental jobs or have joined other environmental efforts, this information was not routinely collected. In the future this type of information would be useful to track, in order to celebrate and potentially deepen the networks which were initiated during the Initiative.
  - It was important to engage people with complementary skillsets in COIs, and as facilitators, coaches, and Initiative Board members, as it required a variety of different skills to plan, grow, and sustain a COI. Additionally, many different types of training was needed to support people involved in these efforts. To the extent possible, the training needs were to be aligned with the skills that COI members required at different points in time.
  - COIs were not fully on board for becoming a nonprofit. Even the best consultants cannot push community change or timely completion of strategic plans and fund development plans, if the community is not ready to reach consensus, or if the reasons for the products are not driven, and fully embraced by them.
  - There was a lack of clarity about the extent to which TRFF valued the COIs work. Some COI and Initiative Board members said that this was because the Initiative did not have clearly stated performance metrics or measures of progress. Funders may want to work in partnership with the community to address this issue at the beginning of similar initiatives. Together, they could develop metrics to later revisit and update at set intervals.
  - During most of the Initiative TRFF essentially reviewed for approval the plans developed by COIs. This practice seemed at odds with the collective impact approach that the Initiative promoted. Some COI participants said they wondered whether their funding requests and progress reports were in the ballpark because TRFF did not have performance targets. Though other COI members liked the freedom of not having specific metrics a few were concerned about whether they were achieving enough. An Initiative Board member said, “You can’t hit a target if you don’t know what the target is.” This person noted that the lack of performance metrics created an atmosphere where the grantees had no conception of whether their efforts were hitting the mark desired by the Foundation. This individual recommended that funders, “In future efforts of this kind craft clear parameters and sideboards for funding and performance and communicate these early and often to your grantee.”
  - The absence of a consistent over time evaluation resulted in lost opportunities for the funder and grantees to work together to transparently revisit, reinforce, and revise assumptions driving the Initiative, review progress, make timely course changes, and communicate their progress to other funders.
  - Funders may want to make tough decisions in partnership with grantees before officially launching similar long-term initiatives. Many difficult questions were intermittently raised but left unanswered during the Initiative. These included the following:
    - Is there a natural lifecycle, or start and end date of a COI?
    - How do you know if a COI has run its course and should be put on hold or ended?
    - What criteria governs whether you should invest more resources (money, time, energy, sponsorship)?
    - Which COIs are more likely to raise money? Is this standard a reason to fund them, or to prioritize funding to others who have worthy strategies but less access to grants or funding sources?
- In hindsight, answers to the above questions could have informed and improved the functioning and integration of COI communication, evaluation, and fund development processes, which were areas where the Initiative, at times, fell short.
- Even though the Initiative was a time limited investment the fact that it ended one year earlier than expected was difficult for many people to handle. The unfortunate circumstance is that for a while the ending of the Initiative may overshadow the many achievements.
  - COIs and Initiative staff reported that it was difficult to interest external funders in their work, in part because funders knew that the Initiative was receiving multi-year funding. To help address this issue of multi-year

"A lesson learned for the foundation is that there is a difference between giving the community a voice and power. It does not have to mean that you leave things too open, and essentially sit back and quietly decide if the community can work up to some standard you have in your mind but which we don't know. That said, I totally respect TRFF for trying this, I just think that the Initiative has been an odd mix – on the one hand lots of reporting requirements, and generous technical assistance. On the other hand – they seem committed to a concept but not willing to say aloud what they really want."

*COI Participant*

"Becoming a nonprofit is a tremendous thing for TRFF and the COIs to take on. In many ways the community has too many nonprofits. And so many do not make it. This was an understandable action by TRFF and the Initiative to take because all of the other options were not possible, but I think most of us were worried that it might not work, and I am sure TRFF was concerned as well. Many consultants and strategies were hired to promote the success of the Initiative as a nonprofit but sometimes that is not enough when an idea is not quite the right fit. Other funders were not jumping in to help either, in part because it was hard to tell who was accountable for creating the argument of why the Initiative should be sustained."

*TRFF Contractor*

"When I think about our work, it was super exciting, but so complex with so many processes. We needed to work in a certain way to reach consensus, and do budgets, and needed to find facilitators and coordinators. It was a pretty demanding amount of work to do and a bit daunting. Today, when I think of this I wonder whether we would have been better doing shorter term ad hoc kinds of projects that we could build on over the years but would not require all the planning time. Funders need to figure out a reasonable balance between paper, ground level work, learning and respite – when it comes to community-driven efforts. But I loved the training, and BEF was very helpful."

*COI Participant*

initiatives, funders may want to sponsor biannual events where grantees can showcase and share their work, learning, and funding needs.

- The COIs were encouraged from the onset to see themselves as a self-sustaining movement. The stage was set to support this sentiment and practice. Less emphasis, however, was put on creating a long-term vision. While TRFF's more open non-prescribed approach to documenting the work was viewed by some as liberating and unique, it was also regarded as a lost opportunity to start with a collective mindset. The stage was not strongly set for the COIs to plan for and see the benefits of having an independent nonprofit structure. An Initiative Board member said, "During the Initiative's early years the Communities of Interest were formed as independent bodies. They were given full control over their funding allocations, hired their own support staff, and had wide latitude in determining the work they would focus on, and how funding would be allocated. To my knowledge it was never communicated to COIs that they would eventually need to become part of a larger organization. This latitude led to problems as the Initiative became a nonprofit." This person recommended, "If the Foundation chooses to begin an Initiative like this again, make it clear to all participants that at some point the initiative will be expected to join together in a cohesive organization and work together internally toward a common goal, and that authority for all funding and staffing decisions will be transferred to an initiative-wide oversight body or some other sponsor organization."

- Some people thought that realistically it could take twenty years of stops and starts to really get community change efforts like the Initiative off the ground. A few also wondered what the Initiative would have been like if it had focused on shorter term prototype projects, fewer COIs, or on a more narrow geographic area. More front end modeling to see if such approaches would be more manageable would likely have been useful.
- The Initiative created a culture of collaboration and supported community leadership and capacity building. It achieved what it set out to do, as it promoted the setting of agendas and resource sharing, at the same time as community members were mobilized to take collective ownership of environmental issues. It also built the cadre of, and skills of environmental stewards, led to new ideas and strategies, and leveraged resources in projects which supported the watershed community. Moreover, in many ways the Initiative acted as an environmentally focused social movement. The learning and legacy of this work will benefit the watershed community for years to come.
- The Initiative leveraged over \$63 million working with 150 community partners.

The balance of this report is organized the following way:

**Section 2 Initiative Journey** describes the main activities associated with the three main phases of the Initiative.

**Section 3 Hindsight Reflections** summarizes reflections of persons interviewed for this report.

**Section 4 Summary** presents a few final reflections from people involved in the Initiative.

## SECTION 2. Phase 1 Research and Relationship Building 2009-2012

### 2009-2012

- TRFF listened and learned
- TRFF selected the Puyallup Watershed
- TRFF launched the Watershed Advisory Group
- The idea of Communities of Interest took hold
- TRFF believed that the community must lead the way
- TRFF made a \$10 million, 10-year commitment

Long held values to listen and learn from others drove TRFF's research and relationship building work. Since 2000, TRFF's philosophy, "We seek to listen, learn, understand and support a common vision," and mission, "Investing resources and relationships in grassroots leaders, environmental sustainability and global peace," have driven and undergirded TRFF investments.

In 2009, building on their commitment to protect the environment TRFF began an environmental program strategy review that ended up in the concept of focusing on a watershed. These efforts convinced TRFF that the recovery of Puget Sound depended in large part on local action to reduce polluted water runoff and make other changes needed to restore habitat.

In late 2011 TRFF's Board of Trustees concluded a watershed search review process by committing to focus ten years of resources into the Puyallup Watershed. One of their aims was to see diverse communities united by a collective vision for the watershed. TRFF Board, staff and community determined that recovery of the Puget Sound depended on such a vision.

TRFF knew that the Puyallup Watershed was an ambitious choice. It was an area largely shaped by historic patterns of development and industrialization, where people and communities in this diverse area unevenly bear the consequences of growth. The Watershed spans 1,040 square miles of land stretching from Mount Rainier to Commencement Bay and is home to 420,000 people living in 17 cities and towns. It includes forests, agricultural lands, and one of the biggest ports on the West Coast. Concerns over the sale and subdivisions of land were great and posed a threat to forest and farmlands. TRFF discovered that there were many disparate, disconnected, and under-funded environmental projects in the watershed. They also learned that many of the efforts underway were similar, but were not well-connected, resulting in people competing, rather than collaborating for environmental funding. The problems facing the area were complex, and far ranging, and fell into many different areas of concern, and areas of interest.

In 2012, TRFF continued to gain a deeper understanding of the watershed. They spent a significant amount of time hosting dinners and attending meetings to listen and learn about the key issues in the watershed and to build connections with grassroots organizations. TRFF considered different models that the Initiative might want to employ. The idea of COIs took hold. There was a strong desire to include individuals with common interests and establish a venue where communities could develop relationships, share their perspectives and work together to focus on a common purpose and jointly develop actions. TRFF was hoping that by fostering collaboration, cultivating leadership, and promoting learning

about place-based work that investments in the Puyallup Initiative would continue to grow. TRFF believed in local action and did not want to directly operate the Initiative. Instead, they wanted to support community ownership and learning at whatever pace was right for the community.

Consistent with their evolving model, TRFF wanted to keep some distance from the COIs to truly allow a community owned and led organization to set the agenda and direction. People and organizations with expertise in many different areas were engaged at every juncture in the Initiative's planning. One such organization, which had relevant experience working in watersheds, Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF), became immersed in TRFF's strategic discussions and received a contract from TRFF to support their role as a thought partner in the development of the Initiative.

Assumptions and goals for the Initiative were promoted often by TRFF, including the Strategy Director, one of the key visionaries and leaders for this work. TRFF assumed that:

- An investment in relationship building would provide the foundation needed for long-term systems change.
- People from the community would invest their time, energy, and resources beyond the TRFF investment to create a self-sustaining movement.
- COIs would attract new members by creating an environment where all people and organizations are welcome.
- Members of COIs would hold themselves accountable to the goals they seek to achieve for making progress.

- The Initiative would be more successful if it reflected and embraced the diversity of the watershed and would be seen as more relevant if it were better connected to the population.
- People would see the value of coordinating and integrating their work across COIs.

At the end of 2012 TRFF made a 10-year, \$10 million commitment. TRFF believed the watershed community must lead the way. TRFF knew that “community ownership” would be a key ingredient. There was an intention for the Initiative to ultimately become a self-sustaining entity, but this intention wasn’t necessarily clear or understood by community members who were involved in the Initiative.



## Phase 2 Implementation and Capacity Building 2013-2017

### 2013

- **BEF received a total of \$756,877 for operations, including capacity building grants for COIs**
- The Initiative’s first watershed event was held
- Year 1 TRFF funding to launch and form COIs
- TRFF and BEF were backbone organizations for the Initiative
- COIs began to build their proposals for funding support from TRFF
- The proposal development process was time consuming

In May 2013 BEF moved from being a thought partner to being an intermediary and temporary backbone and received an 18-month contract from TRFF. Examples of BEF responsibilities included developing COI proposals, conducting outreach to facilitators for the COIs, distributing capacity grants, helping COIs do their work, and providing mentoring and skill building workshops to COIs as well as research to support the Initiatives identification of a permanent backbone organization.

In June 2013, the Initiative held an event which was attended by 200 people. TRFF shared their vision for the Initiative with the crowd and introduced BEF’s role as an intermediary. This gathering was described by many people as a pivotal, tipping point moment, and ceremonial beginning of the Initiative.

BEF hit the ground running and in the summer of 2013 issued a call for the formation of new collaborative groups, called Communities of Interest (COI). COI members were informed that they were expected to work collaboratively to

develop a 20-year vision, 10-year workplan, and annual workplan. The COI relationships, proposals and systems took time to navigate. TRFF set aside funds for COIs to hire facilitators. They played an essential but difficult role, as they were charged with creating a welcoming environment, while moving the strategic planning process forward. Some facilitators found the consensus focused planning and budgeting process difficult to navigate. BEF stepped in and provided extra guidance as needed. The proposal completion process was slow moving and had many stops and starts.

### 2014

- **TRFF awarded \$1,251,230 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 2 TRFF funding – 1st round funds to COIs for activities in 2015 (primarily)
- TRFF, BEF and Greater Tacoma Community Foundation (GTCF) were backbone organizations for the Initiative
- GTCF became the fiscal lead for COI funding
- Second Initiative event was held
- Six COIs were funded/or in the process of being funded
- Active Transportation was the first COI to leverage grant resource

In 2014 TRFF, BEF and the COIs were busy finalizing proposals, administering grants, and developing governance structures. As a result, there was limited time for BEF to develop COI governance structures, integrate the work of COIs, or focus on efforts to research or seek a permanent backbone. BEF reported in their Developmental Evaluation from May 2013 to

December 2014 that it was originally expected that the COIs would take 2-3 months using capacity grants to develop their strategic plans. They later learned that it took most COIs 8-9 months to complete their planning process with an additional 3-6 months after receiving funding to develop their governance structures and decision-making processes. Altogether, it took approximately one and a half years from the time that the statement of Interest was submitted until COIs established their decision-making processes and fully launched their strategy work. Some COIs found the visioning process and need to select a coordinator or host organization to be too time consuming.

Despite start-up challenges, the Initiative continued to gain visibility. TRFF took a lead on researching a fiscal lead for COI funding. The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation (GTCF) was chosen to be the Fiscal Lead. COIs also began to demonstrate their capacity to support environmental planning efforts, leverage and apply for grant funds.

By the end of 2014 six COIs had been funded or were in the process of being funded. The six funded COIs included: Agriculture, Active Transportation, Biodiversity, Environmental Education, Forest and Just and Healthy Food System. A seventh COI, Industrial Stormwater, was expected to submit their strategic plan in 2015. All of the above COIs, except the Biodiversity COI, continued to build their capacity throughout the Initiative. The Biodiversity COI, which had a goal to protect and conserve the fauna of the Puyallup Watershed, had exciting ideas, but a small membership that was unable to focus fully on the work. Before ending in 2016, however, it coordinated with other COIs to promote the integration of biodiversity awareness, education, and activities into their workplans. One other COI, Social and Environmental Justice, developed a proposal. One of the partners in this COI focused on environmental justice, and one on social justice. This COI received short term contract funding. The work of these partners drew attention to the importance of the social determinants of different organizations. Clean Water and Salmon COIs did not take shape, largely because they represented

interests that are highly regulated at the state and federal levels and have access to significant funding sources from the state that exceeded TRFF's investment, thereby limiting the incentive for people to participate in the COI process.

It was already becoming evident that the Initiative was more than an environmental effort, as it was also emphasizing community engagement, social justice, and equity, along with environmental values. At this point the COI structures and memberships were forming, but fragile.

## 2015

- **TRFF awarded \$1,736,032 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 3 TRFF funding – 2nd round funds to COIs for activities in 2016
- TRFF, BEF and GTCF were Initiative backbone organizations
- BEF contract ended
- Grand convening/2-day Initiative Conference hosted by TRFF at the Washington State History Museum
- Six COI groups were launched and building capacity

A big focus of 2015 was on capacity building. The BEF contract was not renewed, in part because it might inhibit the development of an independent community process. In the fall of 2015, a new Initiative office was established at Centro Latino in Tacoma, and Program Associate, Program Officer and Strategy Director supported the work from a new location. The Initiative held an annual gathering at the Washington History Museum that became more of a social networking event, than an event focused on backbone planning.



By the end of 2015 six collaborative COIs were launched, involving 102 members. All had Working Agreements and/or Pledges in place. These were useful documents that helped them define their decision making and conflict resolutions. All COIs had some kind of a leadership committee or work teams that acted as a connector with funders. Small groups of people, often with diverse priorities or areas of interest were meeting, championing a collective vision, or building consensus. COIs were focused on their internal growth, but not yet ready to build a community backbone.

A developmental evaluation of the Initiative by an Evaluation Consultant examined the Initiative from May 2013 to December 2015, revealed that COIs echoed a growing source of pride and identity in their own group, but some frustration and uncertainty with the Initiative more broadly. Also noted that areas for improvement for COIs included establishing a stronger sense of internal accountability, recruiting more community partners, and integrating their work with other COIs.

One of the report findings was that COIs found it easier to recruit people to join in the substantive work of the group, and more challenging to include members willing to invest their energy into the operations of the COI or building the social infrastructure of the Initiative. Also, the Evaluation Consultant wrote that although TRFF left the purpose of the Initiative intentionally undefined to share power with community members, retaining too much openness over time has led to ambiguity and uncertainty among community partners, threatening to disrupt the trust and momentum developed up to this point, and interfering with the recruitment needed to build a broad democratic movement.

## 2016

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- **TRFF awarded \$715,393 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 4 TRFF funding – 3rd round funds to COIs for activities in 2017
- TRFF, GTCF and Contractors were the backbone organizations.
- Process to determine organizational structure underway
- Selection for Transitional Board completed

During 2016 and 2017 TRFF engaged in a process to determine the next step organizational structure that the Initiative would take. This included an eight-month community input process that looked at the pros and cons of different potential entities taking on the backbone functions necessary to support the Initiative in the future. TRFF sought community input into the design of a centralized governance structure and establishment of a Community Board of Directors that would be representative of the community and make funding decisions. In April 2016, TRFF hosted three focus groups involving 28 participants from the Initiative to explore potential models for populating the governing board. Participants wanted community-based voices to be prominently represented on the board. They also were worried that a nonprofit backbone, as opposed to a distributed backbone, would not be sustainable in five years, and that it might drain resources from the COIs. They recommended that a transitional board rather than a permanent board might be needed first in order to build the infrastructure necessary to support the board. Selection for the Initiative's Transitional Board was completed.

A study of different organizational models was conducted, and the need to become an independent entity became evident, as the IRS rules

defining independent contractors versus employees indicated the role of COI coordinators have characteristics of employee roles and should be classified as such, in compliance with regulations.

The COIs continued to expand their efforts to build the next generation of environmental activists and catalyze support for different environmental initiatives. They also offered environmental training and resources and leveraged resources to help their COI partners get grants.

## 2017

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- **TRFF awarded \$1,634,722 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 5 TRFF Funding – 4th round to COIs for activities in 2018
- TRFF, GTCF and Contractors were backbone organizations
- Strategies to build a 501(c)(3) underway
- Strategies to select a permanent board underway
- Transitional Board selected a nominating committee
- The Initiative prepared its first general operating request to TRFF
- The Initiative nonprofit launched
- The Initiative Interim Director hired
- The Initiative Community Board selected

Strategies to build a permanent board and start a 501(c)(3) were put in place. The Initiative's Interim Executive Director was hired in March 2017, and soon after was replaced when the Initiative Program Associate was promoted to Interim Executive Director. The Transitional Board focused on governance and met monthly to create recommended governance structures and guidance documents and establish a candidate outreach, recruitment, and selection process. They formed the Nominating Committee in July 2017. By the end of the year a permanent Community

Board was in place. The process to create and choose a Community Board took two years.

At the same time as COIs were planning for the future, they were still integrating other strategies, including equity principles and practices into their own COIs. Though they were not fully ready to focus on cross COI integration, some were looking for opportunities to seek funding together. They also continued forging partnerships with others. For example, Active Transportation COI and Downtown on the Go submitted a proposal to the Scan Design Foundation for scholarship funding to go to Denmark and Sweden to learn about their bike and trail strategies and bring back lessons learned.

A recap of COI work to date reveals that COIs were recognized as contributing to meaningful changes in the watershed. Examples included:

- The Active Transportation COI efforts to advocate for pedestrian safety, resulting in the passage of the School Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Action Plan passed in the City of Tacoma with funding for SRTS projects through 2019.
- The Agriculture COI building awareness and participation in critical farmland conservation programs, such as Agricultural Land Zoning and Transfer of Development Rights.
- The Forest COI expanding forest stewardship throughout the watershed, through education and outreach, landowner engagement, tree coupons and other ways.
- The Stormwater COI increasing engagement with businesses in the Tacoma Tideflats with both face-to-face and web-based learning and collaboration that promotes stronger coordination between local governments, industries, and neighborhoods to address

and prevent stormwater pollution into Commencement Bay and Puget Sound.

- The Just and Healthy Food System COI empowering community through Community Based Participatory Research in Orting, South Tacoma, and Tacoma's Hilltop neighborhood strategies to pinpoint and clarify key issues of food justice confronting their populations.

- The Environmental Education COI work to engage educators and administrators together to incorporate hands-on environmental education and science learning programs.

By the end of the year a permanent Community Board was in place. The process to create and choose a Community Board took two years. In 2017 the Initiative became a legal 501(c)(3).

## Phase 3 Managing A Nonprofit (2018-2021)

### 2018

- **TRFF awarded \$2,554,455 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 6 TRFF Funding – 5th round to COIs for activities in 2019
- Alaska Sustainable Southeast Partnership Trip
- Active Transit COI Scan Design Partnership and Trip to Denmark
- The Initiative now owned by community
- November Community Event celebrating 1st year as nonprofit
- 2nd Initiative general operating request to TRFF (for 2019)
- Initiative Executive Director hired

Five years after development, local action, and community leadership the Initiative entered a new chapter and became an independent, community-led nonprofit. In 2018 the Initiative operated as a community-owned initiative. The search for a permanent executive director was underway in the summer and fall of 2018. After an open search, the Interim Executive Director was hired to be the Executive Director.

Many changes accompanied the Initiative's move to become a 501(c)(3). Some were legal, while others were programmatic. Growing pains and opportunities were associated with both. The change in employment status of COIs posed a challenge. Contractors became employees, and were reporting to the Initiative, rather than to COIs. The Initiative received their first direct grants for operating funds. Each of the COIs engaged in an intensive annual planning process, which included revising their original vision, updating strategies, and creating a workplan and collaborative budget for submission as a grant for review by TRFF. They knew that this task in 2019 would be the Initiative Board's responsibility.

Two of the biggest concerns of COIs as they transitioned to the nonprofit were how they would be evaluated and how they would establish their work priorities. Each had processes they were used to. Lessons learned reveal that change was seen as interfering with autonomy, and as contributing to uncertainty. Before the Initiative became an organization, planning occurred at

the COI level. Now instead of six separate COI entities deciding on their direction, a plan integrated with the whole organization was needed.

A review of the December 2018 survey of the Community Board revealed that Board members believed they most fulfilled their responsibilities in the areas of governance and stewardship, ethics, trust and sustaining and abiding, by federal regulations. They had the most difficulty fulfilling their obligation in outreach, and ensuring adequate resources are in place. COIs reported that it was very difficult to produce materials requesting support because the nonprofit was new, and there were many differences in opinions among Initiative leadership, COIs and the board, about funding priorities, and how to describe the aims and long-term direction of the nonprofit.

The COIs kept working to increase community members' knowledge of water quality improvement needs and other healthy practices. For example, the Stormwater COI helped businesses better navigate permitting in the stormwater inspection process, and the Environmental Education COI focused on educating K-12 students. The Active Transportation COI continued to promote the 2016 Tahoma to Trail report which had identified the health, economic and equity benefits of a completed trail from Tacoma's Point Defiance Park to Mount Rainier. Phases of the COIs work often involved three steps: research, learning and advocacy.

The Initiative engaged in a partnership with the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP). A team flew to Alaska, where staff developed an appreciation for the importance of having shared measurement frameworks and shared infrastructure and communication systems which were

co-developed by partners embedded early on in community initiatives. These areas, throughout the Initiative were considered to be less developed or effective many people engaged in the Initiative.

## 2019

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- **TRFF awarded \$1,585,000 for COI Grants and Operations**
- Year 7 TRFF Funding – 6th round to COIs for activities in 2020
- The Initiative's working sessions identified underlying tensions interfering with staff/board cohesion
- 3rd Initiative general operating grant request to TRFF (for 2020)
- The Initiative continued to operate as a community owned entity
- On 11/27/19 TRFF asked the Initiative to prepare Strategic Plan, Fundraising Plan and Fund Disbursement Plan by the end of 2020

During 2019, the COIs continued to focus on equity and engagement of diverse populations in COI planning. For example, The Just and Healthy Food System COI hosted the Black Celebration at the R.I.S.E. Center, an event that engages members from the Greater Tacoma area and brings them together to plan opportunities for the Black community.

A consultant was hired to conduct 12 working sessions with Initiative staff in 2019. The determination was made that the Initiative was not ready for aggressive resource development, and instead shifted attention on helping get staffing structures and systems in place. The firm created a development plan outline that was representative of a full-fledged resource development structure and system which would need to be phased on over the coming years as capacity

allows. Changes in COI leadership, different priorities of COIs regarding the level and type of investments needed to sustain a nonprofit, and lack of time to focus on cultivating funders were some of the reasons for the Initiative not being ready for fund development. In the summer of 2019, the Executive Director engaged a subgroup of COI staff members to develop a staffing structure. Work to increase staff and COI participant confidence in the future was also underway.

The Initiative hired a Development and Communication Strategist in June, and a Controller in August 2019. They also made changes in board tenure that might make it easier to engage more board members and explored ways to recruit more COI participants. At the same time, the disconnect between COIs and the nonprofit board continued to grow. The Initiative Board was focused on building infrastructure and norms, while the COIs were becoming more centered on dismantling racism and centering equity. The contrast between the people focused on structural changes versus those focused on inclusivity was challenging to manage. The Initiative staff and board were working to build an accountable program, which had structured bylaws and governance processes in place. The COIs were more focused on their projects.

Even though the above challenges were happening the Initiative continued to make a positive influence on the community. As the following chart shows of October 2019, the leveraged resources of COIs totaled \$63,122,896.79.

COI	Total Leveraged Resources	Examples of Projects, and Funders/Grants
The Initiative	\$605,279.03	3-year grant award of \$200,000 per year from an anonymous donor for Initiative general operating costs.
Active Transportation COI	\$33,506,667.10	The Active Transportation COI funds contributed to Foothill Rails to Trails Coalition, bicycle education, Fennel Creek Trail, Safe Routes to School Plan, curricula and infrastructure improvements, Tahoma to Tacoma Trail, Pipeline Trail and Tacoma Trail Benefit Report. The Active Transportation COI supported the procurement of funds for a grant to complete a 2.4-mile portion of the trail from Tacoma Dome Station to the Pipeline Trail connection at First Creek Middle School. The City of Tacoma used the Tahoma to Tacoma Trail Network benefits report in the grant application. Grant funds received from the Scan Design Foundation were used for scholarship funding for a trip to Denmark and Sweden. [Funders included the United States National Parks Service, Pierce County Recreation and Conservation Office, Partners for Places Funders Network, Plan4Health – American Planning Association, Washington State Department of Transportation and the Congestion, Mitigation and Air Quality Program]
Agriculture COI	\$28,519,694.16	Early Initiative funding supported the development of the Agriculture Advisory Group and later Agriculture COI which led to development of the Floodplains for the Future Group and Rounds II and III of Floodplains by Design Funding. The Agriculture COI also received grants to support climate mitigation and adaptation and farmland conservation. The Agriculture COI contributed to the Veterans Internship Pilot Program, and to printing and publishing the Strategy 4 Pierce County agritourism map in the Farm Guide and technical assistance to agricultural producers through provisions of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. [Funders included Farmers Market Promotion Program – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grant – USDA, Pierce County Agriculture Program, State Legislature, USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)/Puyallup Watershed Agricultural Preservation and Salmon Recovery Partnership]
Environmental Education COI	\$10,000.00	The Environmental Education COI contributed to a grant awarded to Forterra for restoration and environmental education work at Dead Man's Pond in Puyallup. This contribution furthered the Environmental Education COI and Forest COI efforts through the Green Puyallup Partnership. [The Environmental Education COI received funds from the Green Partnership Fund – Pierce Conservation District]
Forest COI	\$271,500.00	The Forest COI contributed to Green Puyallup Partnership Strategic Plan, Summit Waller and Green Tacoma Partnership. [Examples of funders/grants included the State Community Forestry Assistance Grant – Washington Department of National Resources, GTCF, and the United States Endowment for Forestry and Communities: Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant]
Stormwater COI	\$118,454.00	Pierce County awarded funds to the Stormwater COI for Puyallup Watershed Council small grant program.
Just and Healthy Food System COI	\$91,302.50	The Just and Healthy Food System COI received a matching grant from Partners for Places, and support from the City of Tacoma Urban Task Force and Community Council Pathway to City grants.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$63,122,896.79</b>	

## 2020

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- **Carry over funds used to support 7th round to COIs for activities in 2021**
- Initiative operating as a community-owned entity
- Executive Director resigns
- Community Board appoints co-interim Executive Directors
- TRFF assessment revealed Initiative and COIs faced significant challenges
- TRFF board voted to culminate the Initiative's funding

There was a deep awareness that the Initiative had many strengths. Based on TRFF's sustainability assessment TRFF considered the strengths of the Initiative to include relationship building and leadership efforts, which have connected people together and provided opportunities for learning and collaboration that wouldn't have existed otherwise. They also cited many wonderful projects, including the Small Forest Landowner Technical Assistance, Latino Farmer and Farmworker Outreach Program, Environmental Education Project, Online Portal for Stormwater Mitigation Efforts, Safe Routes to School Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Project; Tahoma to Tacoma Trail network, Community Based Participatory Research of Food Justice, and Seed to Compost Youth Education Program. Because of this work there was an increased awareness of the watershed.

The Initiative also was facing challenges, including the lack of a formal vision, fundraising and strategic plan, and a high level of COI and Initiative staff turnover. The fact that 2020 was experiencing a pandemic undoubtedly made these issues even harder to address.

When the Executive Director announced her plan to exit the job in the Spring of 2020 there was growing concern over the sustainability of the COI model and the lack of progress raising new funding streams to replace TRFF funding. A consultant was hired to assist the Initiative with transition. This firm prepared a high-level roadmap for an incoming executive director. The consultant specifically stated that they would not be the right organization for interim leadership. As a result, the Initiative Board put co-executive directors in place. One focused more on communication with the COIs, and the other on fund development, and supporting the Initiative Board.

## 2021

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- **TRFF awarded final grant amount of \$600,000 to the Initiative**
- Initiative challenges determined to be too great to sustain 501(c)(3)
- The Initiative winds down operations as a 501(c)(3)
- COIs use \$600,000 for operating 2022 projects and dissolution costs

When one of the co-interim Executive Directors separated the Board appointed the remaining co-interim Executive Director as Executive Director.

The TRFF and Initiative communication and board to board meetings in 2021 resulted in TRFF making a final grant of \$600,000 in May 2021 in support of a request by the Executive Director to provide funding that would allow for transition of projects, and the Initiative time to give input into the wind down process.

The Initiative's Board determined in mid-September 2021 that the Executive Director and Initiative staff had worked diligently during the



COVID-19 pandemic and taken many steps to improve cross-initiative communications and made some progress towards streamlining operations. They noted that the premature cessation of TRFF grant funds created an urgency for COIs to spend down their remaining resources monies on community projects.

The Initiative used the remaining \$600,000 for general operating support. This was the culminating grant for the Initiative, which had united more than 150 community, public, and private funders.

Though TRFF ceased funding earlier than originally expected, they had exceeded the amount they originally expected to invest, making their total investment \$11.8 million. The Initiative nonprofit closed. COIs are using the last grant from TRFF to implement 2022 projects which build on their equity focused environmental work.

All involved in the Initiative learned and achieved a great deal. Examples of hindsight reflections of the people interviewed for this report follow.

## SECTION 3. HINDSIGHT REFLECTIONS

Most of the people interviewed for this report underscored that the Initiative has:

- Created and supported the work of community stewards and connected people to others who share their interest and desire to protect the environment.
- Shined a beacon on the necessity to be inclusive and engage diverse people in environmental efforts and promote data that shows the disproportionate harm that many low-income communities face.
- Resulted in community members developing and using highly transferable skills in decision-making, budgeting, collaboration, planning in their jobs, and volunteer work.
- Been successful in initiating new programs, applying for, and leveraging grants for environmental projects. Most cited data shows that TRFF's investment of \$11,000,000 has resulted in \$64,000,000 of leveraged resources.
- Changed the way local institutions inform and engage the community as solution partners, rather than primarily as partners who provide input and identify challenges.
- Changed the way that institutions prioritize resources. For example, due to the research, education and advocacy efforts pertaining to Safe Routes to School, the City of Tacoma created a new position, the Safe Routes to School Coordinator. Also, the Tacoma-Pierce

County Health Coordinator, and the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department have adopted collaborative community budgeting practices after being exposed to the approach used by the Initiative. In addition, the Pierce Conservation District sought equity training for staff that included more exposure to the Initiative's equity values.

COI participants shared their reflections about some of the Initiative challenges they faced. Most thought that:

- The Initiative's proposal process was overly complex and needed to be simplified, especially given that the process was likely deterring some community people from joining COIs.

Suggestions included shortening the proposal process to include a brief action plan that lists three to five key activities, and related outcomes, and embedding at least one system change/impact statement. Several COI participants thought that activities should incorporate (but not have separate) equity principles and practices and include at least one sustainability-focused activity. They did not want equity activities to be standalone activities, rather they wanted the equity focus to be integral to the work. Most wanted to eliminate the 10-year visioning process, as they thought it was unrealistic. Instead, they thought that requiring a systems change activity was more important, and could be focused on changing structural issues, practices, and policies standing in the way of promoting a safe, equitable, and healthy environment.

COI participants also suggested simplifying the report back process. COIs recommended holding in person meetings instead with the funder to describe progress, lessons learned, and funding needs. They suggested that the funder conduct in person check-ins where they could engage in candid discussions with grantees about the work underway, and identify potential areas where support from the foundation, including training, advocacy, and introduction to other funders would be useful. One Initiative Board member said that these in between meetings would pave the way for "real-time funder/grantee engagement" and help to dispel the us and them relationships that funders and grantees often have."

- TRFF may have employed too much of a hands-off approach and could have been clearer about communicating their long-term vision for the project, expectations about evaluation, and necessity of the COIs to be integrated and operated under one management entity.
- The Initiative should have included specific metrics across COIs, including tracking the diversity of people involved, as well as increases in the number of young people.

Direct quotes provided by COI participants are presented on the next page.

"There were a lot of layers of people and processes to navigate. For some COI participants who were unfamiliar with bureaucracy the strategic plan requirements were daunting and off putting. For others who were familiar with writing grants and working on environmental projects, it was at times frustrating as they had to learn new ways of decision-making and budgeting in which they may not fully believe. Some were in the position of listening to people who were not subject matter experts but had a lot of great ideas, and a lot of energy. Many found the work very exciting and liberating because they could pitch ideas and be heard and have a say in what the group might do."

*COI Participant*

"I was involved in a COI and in the focus groups. It raised all sorts of questions. Some people wanted more business people and tribal members at the table. Others like me were not even sure why the foundation was so adamant about the community having a community-owned governance structure when we were in the rudimentary stages of sustaining what in reality is the mini-backbone of our COIs. Also, it seemed like if it was an expectation that we all connect to this main organization many of us thought that TRFF should have made a stronger case from the launch of the project to do so. So much of this seemed simultaneously to many of us like a grand idea and a grand time taker, no more how noble the premise. But the really good things about the process were that we talked more about equity, and the kinds of skills needed to support a backbone organization – because those are the same skills that we all needed to have to support and scale the work of our COIs, and the conversation raised tons of awareness about the people who we are trying to engage in environmental work – the youth, more funders, people with fund development skills, and connections to the community."

*COI Participant*

"Many members of the public, including young people, were hearing and working on solutions to problems that they maybe never considered, or thought they had a voice in solving. Many more young people are seeing how they can work to improve the health and environment of our region. They are our future scientists and activists. The Initiative was opening the doors to community members to be changemakers. Once these doors open I dare someone to try to close them again."

*COI Participant*

"What was interesting about this time in the Initiative is that the work of COIs was barreling ahead at the same time as the work on the nonprofit. We had so much to be proud of because things were happening in the community. This gave our work momentum and meaning. But COIs were still more focused on their own work, and not on integration across COIs, though we all knew now it was supposed to happen. I am not sure that is even the most sensible approach given the resources and time that COI participants and partners had to focus on the work. But I do think it was necessary for all of us to focus on DEI, and when I look back I wonder if that should have been the one thing we universally focused on, and that would have been the purpose of the Initiative – to bring diverse people into all different types of environmental projects. But we were not there yet in thinking it all out. There were a lot of practical things we needed to do to get the nonprofit status and all the other things together."

*COI Participant*

"COIs drew attention to the relationship between trails and health, and the need to keep ensuring that resources are available and accessible to places and populations where there is greatest need."

*COI Participant*

"As a member of a COI during this time I could feel things moving. The Initiative became known for sharing data, raising awareness, promoting events and starting programs. COIs were beginning to make their mark. But looking back, I didn't really think much beyond the COI I was working with, although I did wonder from time to time about how we would keep being able to raise the money we need to grow some of the projects we were talking about."

*COI Participant*

"A lesson learned for the foundation is that there is a difference between giving the community a voice and power. It does not have to mean that you leave things too open, and essentially sit back and quietly decide if the community can work up to some standard you have in your mind but which we don't know. That said, I totally respect TRFF for trying this, I just think that the Initiative has been an odd mix – on the one hand lots of reporting requirements, and generous technical assistance. On the other hand – they seem committed to a concept but not willing to say aloud what they really want."

*COI Participant*

"This was an incredible time for all of us. The COIs were full of promise, exciting places to figure out the landscape, sort out priorities, and hear the perspectives of others. We were creating something. We also were trying to figure out the process, which was not for the faint of heart. Sometimes it seemed that the process trumped the project so people who could not handle that were frustrated. Others who were more used to things like goals and objectives were not as put off, but instead were sometimes impatient with people who had very different ideas, largely because they were used to working in environments that were more prescribed, and predictable. It was fun, albeit at times contentious seeing all the worlds simultaneously collaborate and collide."

*COI Participant*

## SECTION 4. SUMMARY

Soon after TRFF announced its final grant of \$600,000 in June 2021 to the Puyallup Watershed Initiative many community members expressed their thoughts in writing to TRFF about the Initiative.

One person wrote, “It is hard to believe ten years went so fast. Thank you TRFF. I think it was a huge success.”

Another reported, “For me, TRFF has generated a significant legacy in the community.” Yet another individual recalled, “The time that I spent was honestly some of the most rewarding of my career. I think so often about our conversations and problem solving, and I remember so many of the challenges and solutions that we navigated together. I am incredibly appreciative, and proud of the collaborative spirit and work that we all did together on this. The time was a gift, and the people involved were very special.”

Lastly, a longtime COI member reported, “TRFF provided profound community support in a creative and engaging manner through the Initiative. Like most big undertakings there have been highs and lows, great adventures, and some challenging struggles. Mostly there has been a lot of great people trying to make a positive difference in the place they call home. I appreciate everything TRFF has invested, not only in the Initiative, but in the people who lead the way.”



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