



VALADRIAN
creative & consulting

OREGON CONSERVATION & RECREATION ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

EVERYONE BELONGS OUTDOORS

Engaging urban populations in the Portland metro region — findings and recommendations from the North Willamette Watershed District pilot.

Prepared for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Data gathered July–September 2025

WHAT WE DID

Fourteen interviews, two communities, one question

Does ODFW reach the people who already live closest to its rivers?

14

individual interviews
with NWWD staff and
community members

2

community focus
groups

28

total focus group
participants

- ODFW North Willamette Watershed District staff, across programs
 - People of Color Outdoors PDX — community members and leadership
 - Líderes Naturales, Wood Village — community members and leadership
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THE HEADLINE

Both groups fish. Only one has heard of us.

80%

POCO participants
who have gone fishing

85%

Líderes Naturales
participants who have
gone fishing

30%

Líderes Naturales who
had heard of ODFW at
all

The gap is not interest. It is not even participation. It is the relationship between these communities and the agency that manages the water they are already standing in.

TWO COMMUNITIES, TWO DIFFERENT GAPS

QUANTITATIVE SNAPSHOT

	POCO	LÍDERES NATURALES
First-generation immigrants	10%	100%
Prefer a language other than English	0%	85%
Over 40 years old	40%	90%
Have gone fishing	80%	85%
Have gone hunting	40%	25%
Have heard of ODFW	90%	30%

Líderes Naturales faces a **visibility** gap — outreach has not reached Spanish-speaking, immigrant-centered networks. POCO knows ODFW well and faces a **belonging** gap — safety, representation, and trust.

WHAT WE HEARD

PEOPLE OF COLOR OUTDOORS PDX

Blaxican, Afro-Latino, African American, Hispanic American participants

- **Awareness is transactional.** ODFW is where you buy a fishing license — not conservation, research, or wildlife viewing.
- **Cultural redlining.** Gear, gas, and day passes mark the outdoors as belonging to "other people."
- **Safety, not preference.** Confederate flags in campgrounds and hostile questioning on trails are actively shrinking where people will go.
- **Information lives in affinity spaces.** People want the basics — gear, place, rules — delivered somewhere they already feel welcome.

LÍDERES NATURALES, WOOD VILLAGE

Hispanic American, Mexican, Latiné participants

- **Near-zero awareness.** Those who knew ODFW assumed it only regulated fishing and waterways.
 - **Outdoors is a family event.** Activities that can't hold three generations and mixed ability levels read as exclusionary.
 - **Youth are the entry point.** Make the first step easy and appealing for kids, and the family follows.
 - **Immigrant safety.** The current climate has made public space and contact with government feel risky — staying home now feels safer.
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LEADERSHIP VOICE — PAMELA SLAUGHTER, PEOPLE OF
COLOR OUTDOORS

"They didn't come just to put worms on hooks, they came prepared to give the group a full learning experience."

On ODFW staff supporting a POCO outing.

Where ODFW shows up in person, with preparation and follow-through, the relationship is already strong. The problem is not the quality of the engagement. It is the reach.

THE CORE FINDING

Outdoor recreation is not an individual pursuit here. It is a community and cultural experience.

FOR LATINX PARTICIPANTS

The draw is *connection* — family, food, shared learning. Outdoor time is woven into ordinary life, not scheduled as recreation.

FOR BLACK AND AFRO-LATINO PARTICIPANTS

The draw is *belonging* — representation, restoration, collective safety. The barrier is who the space appears to be for.

Inclusive engagement takes more than translation. It takes design that meets each community where it already is — linguistically, culturally, and emotionally.

BUILT AND LIVE

A place to send people today

Scan or follow the links — both are public and work on a phone in Spanish-speaking households without a desktop.



STORY MAP

The narrative version — who these communities are and where they already go.

storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/49a78901dd90416492ce8aa198cf60f6



INTERACTIVE MAP

The working tool — access points, sites, and the layers behind the findings.

experience.arcgis.com/experience/f7868411b7694e19a472a663dd8ca4b1

BOTTOM LINE

The communities are already outside.

They are fishing, gardening, walking, camping, and taking their families to the water. The work is not persuading anyone to go outdoors. It is making sure the agency that manages those places is visible, legible, and trusted by the people already there.

Full findings, personas, and the complete outreach inventory are in the written report. Happy to take questions.
