



A Word from our Executive Director

COVID-19 laid bare so many inequities in our food system, but it also showed our community's deepening commitment to local farms and food justice. What we learned over the last three years is that building a resilient food system does more than nourish our community. It brings us together across political divides. It calls us to work across sectors and advocate for food in healthcare, transportation to markets, and affordable housing. It requires us to confront the injustice that is pervasive throughout the food system.

Gorge Grown has moved far beyond its first project, the launch of the Hood River Farmers Market in 2006. This year we joined a team of organizations to advocate for migrant and seasonal farm worker health. We distributed local food in 10 remote towns from Maupin to Cascade Locks. We formalized a bi-state group to preserve farmland and create more equitable land access. We delivered local produce to the doors of food insecure Latinx and Native American families quarantining with COVID-19.

As you read this report, I ask that you hold a vision for our local food system in your mind: Imagine a place at your table for all of the people who pick the fruit, catch the fish and tend the farms. Imagine **every** home and belly full of nutritious, local food. Imagine a local food land trust supporting beginning farmers. Imagine all of the salmon returning. Imagine a self-sufficient Columbia River Gorge where all of the food we need is produced with integrity and accessible to all.

In solidarity,

Sarah Sullivan



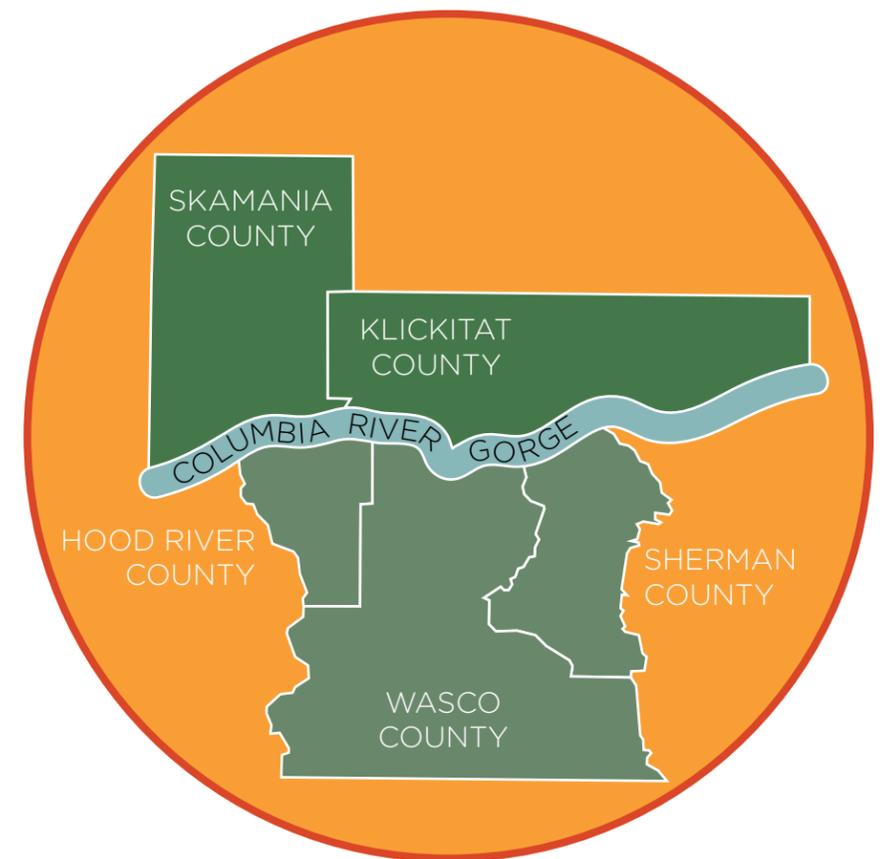
Gorge Grown Acknowledges

Gorge Grown Food Network is located within the ancestral territories of Indigenous peoples including the Wasco, Warm Springs, Paiute, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Kah-milt-pah, Klickitat, Klinquit, Kow-was-say-ee, Li-ay-was, Ochechotes, Palouse, Pisquose, Se-ap-cat, Shyiks, Skinpah, Wah-lal-la, Wenatshapam, Wishxam, Yakama, and Nimiipuu peoples. We also acknowledge the sovereignty and role of the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes—the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Nez Perce Tribe—and our responsibility to work together with these tribes and other indigenous peoples of the region and beyond. We recognize the devastating historical and ongoing impacts that colonization has inflicted upon Indigenous people. We are committed to supporting indigenous food sovereignty and growing our Indigenous-focused programming, while standing in solidarity with Indigenous communities who have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial.

Who We Are

Our mission is to build an inclusive, resilient regional food system that improves the health and-well being of our community.

We envision a healthy, self-sufficient Columbia River Gorge where our food is produced with integrity and is valued, abundant, and accessible to all.



Gorge Grown Staff

- Yeli Boots**, Mercado del Valle Ambassador
- Audra Cody**, Farmers Market Assistant Manager
- Patty Garland**, Veggie Rx Program Coordinator
- Jordan Haas**, Food Security Coalition Coordinator
- Kiara Kashuba**, Food Access Coordinator
- Hannah Ladwig**, Communications & Outreach Manager | Hood River Farmers Market Manager
- Joel Pelayo**, Latino Outreach
- Kelsey Rairigh**, Farmers Market Assistant Manager
- Sarah Sullivan**, Executive Director
- Jenny Twhoig**, Mobile Market Assistant Manager

Board of Directors

- Alma Gaeta**, Peachwood Orchard
- Courtney Jackson**, N.D
- Buck Jones**, Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission | Cayuse/ Umatilla Tribal Member
- Edwina King**, Stambloom Meats
- Paul Rygielwicz**, Environmental Protection Agency
- Steve Seymour**, Samules Yoelin Kantor LLP | Mosier Valley Lavender
- Rachel Suits**, White Salmon Valley School District | Board President

Our Approach



Increase Supply

GGFN strives to support our local producers and gatherers by bolstering markets and business development. We provide technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. We broker relationships between institutional buyers, farmers, fishermen, chefs, schools and manufacturers seeking local ingredients.



Program Highlight: Crop Talks

Throughout the spring and summer of 2021, we held 6 Crop Talks for farmers from across the Gorge to come together and learn from each other in partnership with Underwood Conservation District and Oregon State University.

Increase Access & Demand

GGFN aims to ensure equal access to quality food for all through farmers markets, a Mobile Market, and the Rural Farmers Market Network. The Veggie Rx Program enables health care providers to prescribe fresh fruits and vegetables to food insecure residents.



Photo from David Hanson



Empower & Mobilize

GGFN believes in a collaborative approach to building a resilient, inclusive food system. Through partnerships with dozens of key organizations like the Food Security Coalition, Northwest Tribal Food Sovereignty Coalition, Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network, and the Columbia Gorge Health Council we aim to create lasting change through collective impact.



Photo from David Hanson

Staff Spotlight: Joel Pelayo

In 2018, Gorge Grown hired community health worker and organizer Joel Pelayo to help engage the Latinx community. Joel is co-founder of Raíces Cooperative Farm, a program that provides organic gardening education and small business development services to Latinx market gardeners. In addition to growing and selling produce like tomatoes, chiles, garlic, and blueberries at Gorge Grown's Mercado Del Valle, Joel also coordinates the Mesa Comunitaria (Community Table) where other gardeners can drop off their produce to be sold.

Our COVID-19 Response

Even before Covid-19, 1 in 3 people in the Gorge worried about where their next meal would come from. A 2015 survey by the Columbia Gorge Health Council found that 53% of farmworkers and 59% of Native Americans are food insecure.

Veggie Rx

Gorge Grown provided Veggie Rx to vulnerable, homebound cancer patients, Native American and Latinx families quarantined and recovering from COVID-19. Over \$130,000 was distributed in Veggie Rx between 2019 - 2021.



"Thank you for the help during a very difficult time. There's been times where I felt like I would go hungry and didn't because of this program."

- Veggie Rx Recipient

Farmworker Advocacy

When Covid-19 spread among farmworkers and employees at food processing facilities across America, Gorge Grown staff joined the Migrant/Seasonal Farm Worker Health Initiative coordinated by The Next Door Inc, a social service agency in the region. The multi-pronged approach includes six action committees focused on personal protection equipment, housing, food, health care, workplace safety, and communications. Committee members include Latinx health equity advocates, medical professionals, orchard owners, and social service providers.

ESSENTIAL WORKERS



WE FEED AMERICA



Safe & Inclusive Farmers Markets for All

When the pandemic hit, Gorge Grown staff developed an exemplary farmers' market safety protocol that has now been replicated around the county.

Program Highlight: Hood River Farmers Market SNAP Match

Gorge Grown provides free incentive funds to customers using SNAP (formerly food stamps) at farmers markets. SNAP sales at Hood River Farmers Market in 2020 more than doubled from the previous year. Since 2019, customers have spent more than \$36,000 in SNAP benefits on local food at the market. Gorge Grown has provided an additional \$16,958 in matching funds.

"I am able to buy a variety of seasonal, nutritious produce without worrying about my ability to have enough money at the end of the month."

- SNAP Match Customer

Program Highlight: Mobile Farmers Market 25% Discount Program

SNAP and SNAP Match only go so far. Some of our most vulnerable community members cannot access SNAP or food assistance programs. To ensure everyone has access to fresh local food, we provide a 25% discount* to Mobile Farmers Market shoppers who may need extra help. This can include: food pantry clients, seniors or a budget, veterans, farmworkers, Section 8 housing recipients, Medicare or Medicaid recipients, Families with Free or Reduced Lunch, or others who need help paying for food. We don't require shoppers to show proof of need.



What We Do

We believe that people yearn to be connected to their food and know where it comes from, not just by shopping locally, but by participating in a vibrant, connective and authentic food system. We strive to actualize this vision by investing in an interrelated suite of projects and partnerships.

Program Highlight: Mercado Del Valle

Mercado del Valle was designed by and for the Latinx community in 2013. It is more than a farmers' market — imagine a mariachi band, children dancing traditional Baile Folklorico, handmade tamales, elote, a bike-powered smoothie maker, and tons of colorful peppers and tomatillos.

Bilingual Outreach Specialist Yelitza Boots runs the Mercado's information booth, promotes the market, schedules events, and recruits musicians. One of Yeli's favorite parts of the job is passing out "Power of Produce" (POP) tokens: Anyone under the age of 13 receives a \$2 token to buy fresh fruits or vegetables, plus a stamp in their POP Club passport book. This gets young people excited about trying new things at the market.



"I believe Mercado benefits the community in all ways. People come to support each other. We get to know our neighbors, our farmers and our community organizations. There is a sense of joy through music, art, and laughter."

- Yelitza Boots, Bilingual Outreach Specialist

Program Highlight: Gleaning

Columbia Gorge Gleaning offers a simple solution to the problem of food waste by connecting the surplus of fruits and vegetables from local farms, orchards and backyards with food insecure people in our communities. We've held 40 gleans in the last 3 years: 165 volunteers picked 20,586 pounds of fresh produce to donate to 10 access sites, including food banks, community meal sites, and nonprofit partners.



Program Highlight: Mobile Farmers Market

We delivered \$153,000 in produce to 380 market stops in 12 Gorge communities in the last 3 years. Produce sold through the Mobile Farmers Market was purchased directly from 49 local farmers, 90%+ from historically oppressed farmers.

25% of food sold at the Mobile Farmers Market was purchased using food assistance programs



40% of fresh food in the United States goes to waste.

Program Highlight: Hood River Farmers Market

In the last three years, Hood River Farmers Market has supported over 114 family farmers, food producers and small businesses. With record sales climbing each year, the market has put \$2,206,000 back into our local economy since 2019.

Hood River Farmers Market's gross sales have increased by an average of 30% each year since 2019.



A Networked Approach

The Columbia Gorge Food Security Coalition is a cross-sector network of over 50 organizations and individuals working together to strengthen the local food system. Gorge Grown Food Network, nominated to serve as the Coalition's Coordinating Agency, houses the Coalition staff and provides facilitation, project support, grant management, fundraising and accounting.

The Coalition has 5 working groups which include:

Food Access

Farmer Support

Food Policy

Tribal Food Sovereignty

Farmland Preservation & Land Access

We commit to creating a just, equitable local food system based on solidarity and dignity. We acknowledge that the current food system is built and dependent upon the oppression of historically excluded communities. We will confront the systemic injustices that create and perpetuate poverty and hunger.

- Columbia Gorge Food Security Coalition Equity Statement



Photo From Swanson Studio & Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Buck Jones is a Gorge Grown Board Member and the Co-Chair of the Tribal Food Sovereignty Committee. Since the pandemic hit, Buck has pivoted from salmon marketing to delivering food and other resources to more than 250 families a week in partnership with a newly formed Gorge Native American Collaborative.

Tribal Food Sovereignty:

Formed in 2018, this group includes enrolled members of the following tribes: Cayuse/Umatilla, Nez Perce, Chippewa, Blackfeet, Warm Springs and the Rock Creek Band of the Yakama Nation.

"The salmon is sacred to our people. We have been in the Gorge since time immemorial so it has a special meaning."

- Buck Jones

Food Access

The COVID-19 Pandemic greatly impacted summer food access programs for youth in our region. Food security coalition members helped secure funding and fill in the gaps during the weeks when school meals were not served. Food banks helped source food. Local farmers provided fresh fruit. A local meal delivery company distributed breakfasts and lunches while the school district was closed during Spring Break.



North Wasco County School District served over 20,000 meals during between June and July 2020, with over 9,000 meals going to youth living in seasonal farmworker housing.

White Salmon Valley School District saw a greater than 800% increase in the number of school meals served in 2020 over 2019 and Hood River County School District had an increase of 133%.

Farmland Preservation & Land Access

This bi-state group of 15+ agencies, chaired by Gorge Grown Director Sarah Sullivan, came together in response to skyrocketing prices of farmland in the region. Partners meet quarterly to build synergy and explore working land conservation easements and other tools that can help preserve farmland.

**Did you know?
Hood River County has the most expensive farmland in Oregon.**

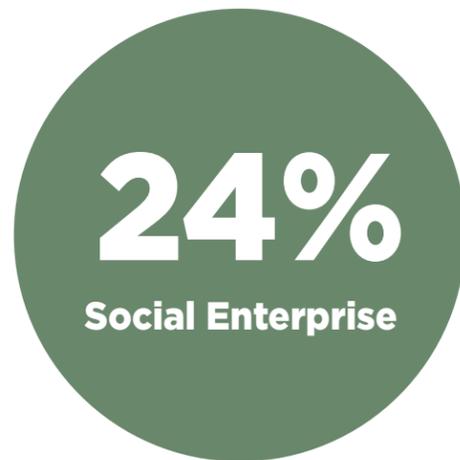


Photo from David Hanson

Financial Report

2019 - 2021

INCOME



Administrative/ Overhead Costs



Support Gorge Grown

Visit GorgeGrown.com to make a donation or contact communications@gorgegrown to find out how you can best support Gorge Grown Food Network.

Putting What We Believe Into Practice

Those working to put food on our tables deserve fair compensation and benefits. Over the last 3 years, we have raised the funding to ensure that Gorge Grown staff earn competitive wages. Full time staff also receive full medical benefits, generous paid leave, 2 months paid parental leave, paid bereavement and family medical leave, a 3% retirement match among other benefits.

What's Next?



Increase recruitment, outreach, and support of new, beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers.

Expanding the Veggie Rx Program for Oncology patients to The Dalles and Cascade Locks. Secure more funding for Veggie Rx in Washington.

Support the expansion of local food aggregation and distribution.

Looking Forward

In 2022, we'll start sowing the seeds of an ambitious five-year Strategic Plan. Visit gorgegrown.com or find us on social media to keep following our growth.





 LOCAL  **GORGE
GROWN**
FOOD NETWORK

Our Mission: To build a resilient and inclusive food system that improves the health and well-being of our community.