



Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center

**Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center
Business Plan**

a project of the Kittitas Environmental Education Network

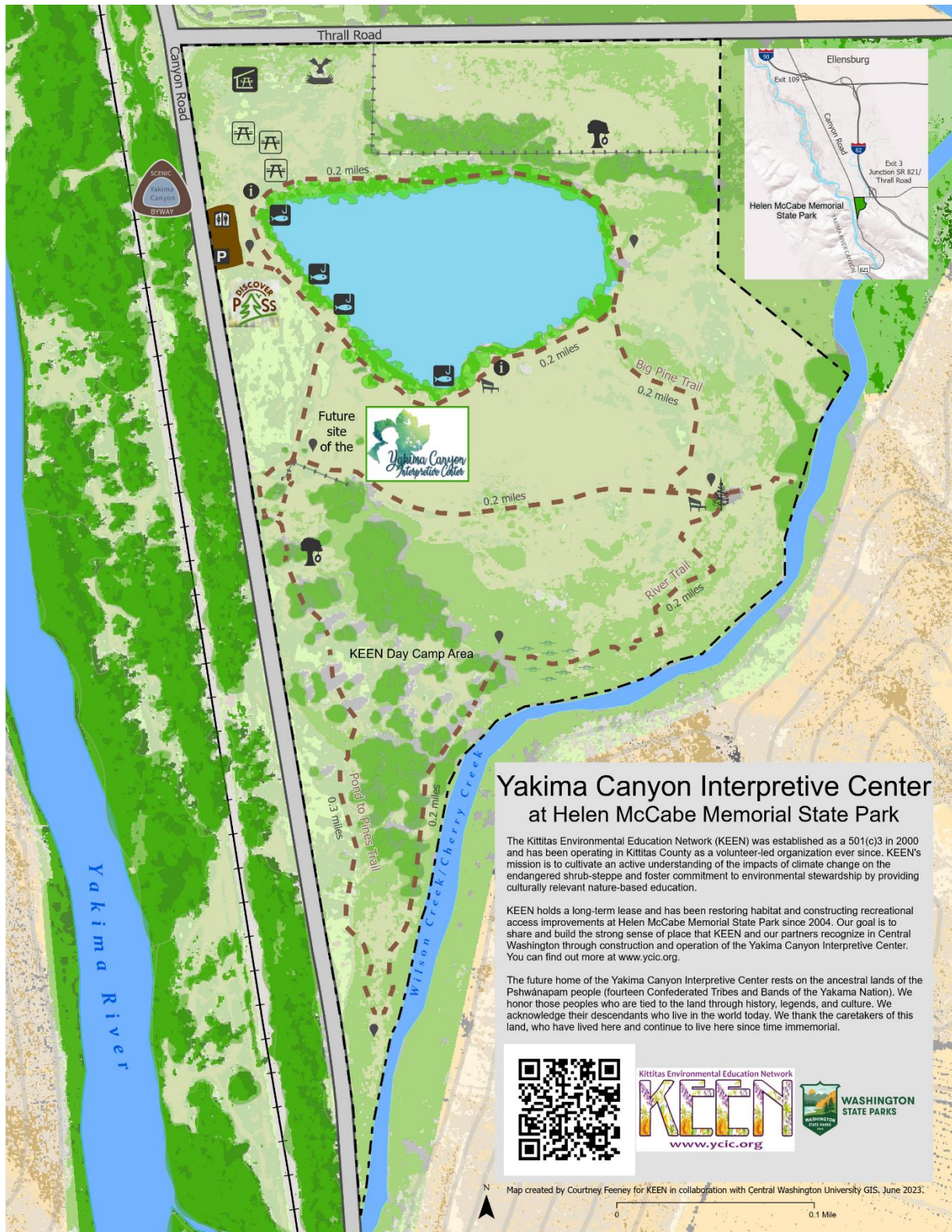
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YCIC Conceptual Design

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Executive Summary

The Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center (the Center) is a project of the Kittitas Environmental Education Network (KEEN). The Center is planned for the mouth of the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway at Helen McCabe State Park and anticipates 100,000 visitors annually. Visibility along the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway, with 1,500,000 travelers annually, ensures a steady flow of visitors.

KEEN has been restoring habitat and improving recreation amenities at Helen McCabe State Park for two decades and holds a long-term lease on the park to construct the Center. As the gateway to the first designated Scenic Byway in Washington State, the Center will welcome travelers from I-90 and I-82 who come to experience world-class fly-fishing, wildlife viewing, and Central Washington wines and cider.

The economic and community benefits stemming from interpretive nature centers and accompanying conservation efforts are well known. Research has shown that investment in such facilities returns between \$5 and \$15 dollars to the community for every \$1 invested. Similar facilities create and maintain open spaces, improve water and air quality, enhance community health, provide recreational opportunities, attract and retain businesses, and support economic development in their region. In turn, all of this generates local tax revenue from both increased property values and from tourism spending.

KEEN is working with Marc Brown Architecture & Design to design and construct the Center. Together we envision an approximately 4,000sq.ft. structure built in harmony with the park and with the scenic byway. Integrated into the surrounding habitat with ample room for rentable meeting spaces, event spaces, and wine/gift concessionaires, the Center will be a tourist destination and a local treasure.

KEEN's financial plan shows a positive revenue stream in the first 6 years supported by gift-shop sales and other innovative revenue streams. Opportunities to name the facility and

“As I read your note, the memory of my mother's interest and passion in developing and encouraging the recreational potential of central Washington jumps up. Seeing others active, involved, and most of all having fun outdoors, was so much of what made her life meaningful. The joy she felt in watching others have fun, myself my brother and the many family, friends and students, we all found a confirmation in her enthusiasm for the outdoors and the joy it so richly returns to those of us who venture out. This little park and the anticipated interpretive center is a wonderful expression of what meant so much to her”.

Ross McCabe

supporting structures are built into the capital plan.

Continued collaboration with Central Washington University and non-profit groups will allow KEEN to expand our program offerings and provide a sustainable revenue stream in support of operations. Marketing and promotions will occur statewide and ensure a steady income from meeting and event rentals.

Landscape improvements to the park, which have been implemented by KEEN over the last two decades, will attract people to the Center to stretch their legs on the trails, fish for the afternoon at the pond, and explore available educational programs. KEEN will expand on our current educational programming and collaborations with area schools to offer one-time and re-occurring learning opportunities to K-12 and beyond. Citizen science programs will be expanded with highlights for long term climate change studies, birding, habitat, and wildlife observations.

This project represents an unparalleled opportunity to engage visitors and community members of all ages in outdoor and climate change education, draw tourists to Central Washington, undertake environmental stewardship and habitat restoration, and accomplish protection of the endangered shrub-steppe biome.



Helen McCabe Park – Photo by Klucking Images

Introduction

The Yakima River Canyon is its own unique landscape. Linear oases supporting vital riparian corridors in this time of climate change. With the highest density of passerines in the state and wandering big horn sheep, it is a wildlife-watchers dream. Nesting birds of prey, endangered plants and animals, economically-important Yakima River trout fishery and salmonid nursery, visible basalt lava flows, and rich Native American history all make the Canyon a distinct place. These stories and themes engage us and keep us working to protect the future of the Yakima River Canyon. The Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center (The Center) will celebrate and share this special place with the world.

The Center will be located at Helen McCabe State Park, the gateway of the 26-mile-long Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway. The Center is inextricably tied to the Canyon with its endangered shrub-steppe habitat, wildlife communities, stunning landscapes, and vital recreational opportunities.

Kittitas Environmental Education Network (KEEN) is a leader in planning for the scenic byway and partners with economic development and tourism entities to ensure the Canyon remains a protected and treasured part of Central Washington State. With a backdrop graced with restored native grasslands, growing colonies of quaking aspen, stately Ponderosa pine, and abundant wild rose, The Center at Helen McCabe Park will be a destination for bringing people together to learn about and enjoy nature.



With inspiring tools that teach and enthuse, The Center will help people of all ages understand how our environment provides us with many valuable resources— so long as we take care of it.

Serving thousands of life-long learners each year, the Center will encourage passion and awe for education and hands-on experiences that promote a healthy respect and appreciation for the natural world. Whether through school-organized field trips, evening lectures, special events, summer camps, or weekend programs, community members will learn the foundation for making wise and informed decisions about how our environment benefits everyone in the community.

For more than 2 decades, KEEN has inspired a nature-based ethic in our community with unique outdoor educational programs, hands-on habitat restoration, and creating a sense of place for learners of all ages. KEEN's habitat restoration and stewardship of Helen McCabe State Park, and our plans to establish the Center there, are great examples of why the Kittitas Valley is a thriving and vibrant place to live, work, and raise a family.

KEEN anticipates that each year more than 100,000 people will visit the Center as they drive along I-90, I-82, or the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway.

Adults may find they enjoy the tranquility of cross-country skiing through towering Ponderosa Pines or simply reading a book in the fresh air with a light breeze. Seniors can easily access the trails, join in on science activities, and volunteer at the Center as docents and leaders for school groups. The Center will take care to ensure everyone of all ages, all stages, and all abilities can enjoy the park. Our community calendar will be filled with opportunities for everyone to join us in education, recreation, and conservation.

For the last decade, KEEN has collaborated with our partners to bring this area back to ecological functionality through our work on invasive species management, floodplain roughening, native planting and engaging our community in hands-on restoration activities.

Thousands of volunteer hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars have been invested at the Center grounds. KEEN collaborates with the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club, Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group, the Washington Conservation Corps, and other groups to restore habitat at Helen McCabe State Park.

With programs for pre-school aged children to seniors, the Center will welcome everyone to our doors and connect them to nature.

In the bustle of everyday life, the opportunity to disconnect from technology and reconnect with something more soothing is a remedy from which we could all benefit.



KEEN Background

The Kittitas Environmental Education Network (KEEN) was established as a 501(c)3 in 2000. Our mission is to cultivate an active awareness and understanding of how our changing climate is impacting our lives and the endangered shrub-steppe by providing nature-based education for all ages and strengthening our commitment to environmental protection and restoration.

KEEN believes in lifelong-learning and provides informal environmental educational opportunities for kids, adults and seniors. KEEN hosts annual events that highlight what is special about our region and we collaborate with subject-area experts for field trip leaders, speakers, and provide learning opportunities and connections to affinity groups at all our events. Our goal is to share and build the strong sense of place that KEEN recognizes in Kittitas County, particularly the endangered shrub-steppe habitat.

KEEN's Nature School programs include summer camps and after school programs. We offer them at Helen McCabe State Park property and within the City of Ellensburg. Each year we expand these programs, reach out to communities of color, and work to secure scholarships and grants so that families who are experiencing financial hardship can still take advantage of our programming.

Our Habitat Restoration Team takes care of Helen McCabe State Park property - the future home of the Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center. Since 2004, KEEN has worked to re-establish native plant communities, manage invasive weeds, build trails, run all our nature school programs, and expand the use and stewardship of the park. This park space is also a hub for much of our outreach in the greater Kittitas County area. We are currently negotiating an additional 50-year lease renewal that will allow us to manage the park in its entirety and move towards returning ecosystem functionality and ecological services on this property on the outskirts of Ellensburg WA.

KEEN consists of a Board of Directors of highly committed individuals, and several active committees including education and habitat. We have 2 full-time outdoor educators and 4 part-time assistants operating our nature school programs. In the summers, we hire up to 20 additional staff for educational programs. Geographically KEEN focuses our work on Kittitas County, but KEEN is active in partnering with groups throughout Central Washington. Our 2024 budget is \$613,000.00.

Our primary goal is to establish (design, construct and operate) the Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center near Ellensburg, WA. The Interpretive Center will serve as the gathering place for our community, for visitors to our community, and for engaging and connecting to nature in Central Washington. As the gateway to the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway, the Interpretive Center

will invite lifelong learners to become active informed citizens, and provide a sense of place to this land we love.



Our Values – What We Believe

- Power of Community – we encourage people to see themselves as part of a diverse community of nature enthusiasts within the community of nature.
- Respect for all life – we show respect for all living things by seeking to understand, by celebrating diverse viewpoints, and by acting with kindness and empathy.
- Personal Experience – we believe there is no substitute for being IN nature. We maintain our lands for maximum biodiversity to provide unique personal experiences and education.
- Getting Outside – we plan frequent experiences in nature because they are critical to the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health of all people.
- Stewardship of the Land – we recognize the interdependence of all living things and strive to maintain the web of life by preserving, restoring, and protecting our land.
- Commitment to Sustainability – we make choices that are environmentally responsible, economically viable, and socially equitable for the long-term stability of our organization, our region, and the earth.

What is Environmental Education?

Environmental education (EE) connects us to the world around us, teaching us about both natural and built environments. EE raises awareness of issues impacting the environment upon which we all depend, as well as actions we can take to improve and sustain it. Whether we bring nature into the classroom, take students outside to learn, or find impromptu teachable moments on a nature walk with our families, EE has many benefits for youth, educators, schools, and communities.

Our nation's future relies on a well-educated public to be wise stewards of the very environment that sustains us, our families and communities, and future generations. It is environmental education which can best help us as individuals make the complex, conceptual connections between economic prosperity, benefits to society, environmental health, and our own well-being. Ultimately, the collective wisdom of our citizens, gained through education, will be the most compelling and most successful strategy for environmental management.

Yet studies consistently reveal that the U.S. public suffers from a tremendous environmental literacy gap that appears to be increasing rather than decreasing. For example, two-thirds of the public fail even a basic environmental quiz and a whopping 88 percent of the public fail a basic energy quiz. These same studies found that 45 million Americans think the ocean is a source of fresh water and 130 million believe that hydropower is America's top energy source.

Environmental education increases student engagement in science

In our schools, research has shown enormous benefits from environmental education. When integrated into a science curriculum, environmental education demonstrably improves student achievement in science. Such an increase is likely due to the fact that environmental education connects classroom learning to the real world. Students, when given a choice, will gravitate towards environmental science. Science fair administrators note that 40 percent of all science fair projects relate directly to the environment, and the Corporation for National and Community Service reports that more than 50 percent of the service-learning programs they fund are focused on the environment.

Environmental education improves student achievement in core subject areas

When integrated into the core curricula or used as an integrating theme across the curriculum, environmental education has a measurably positive impact not only on student achievement in science, but also in reading (sometimes spectacularly), math, and social studies. The same study found that schools that taught the core subjects using the environment as an integrating context also demonstrated:

- Reduced discipline and classroom management problems;

- Increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning; and,
- Greater student pride and ownership in accomplishments.

Even more importantly for many, environmental education employs and enhances critical thinking and basic life skills. Environmental education provides critical tools for a 21st century workforce.

Most Americans are convinced that the environment will become at least one of the dominant issues and challenges of the 21st century, as the growing needs of the growing global population increasingly presses up against the limits of the earth's resources and ecosystems.

At the same time, business leaders increasingly believe that an environmentally literate workforce is critical to their long-term success and profitability, with better environmental practices and improved efficiencies impacting positively on the bottom line while helping to better position and prepare their companies for the future. As one example on the micro scale, the National Environmental and Training Foundation estimates that environmental education about topics such as energy, water and waste management, improved employee health, cleaner working conditions, and recycling would save small and medium sized businesses alone at least \$25 billion/year.

Environmental Education helps address “nature deficit disorder”

A recent study found that children today spend an average of 6 hours each day in front of the computer and TV but less than 4 minutes a day in unstructured outdoor play, leading researchers to discover a new condition specific to this current generation that they have called “nature deficit disorder”.

This extreme emphasis of indoor time spent in front of screens versus outdoor play and discovery has been correlated with negative psychological and physical effects including obesity, loneliness, depression, attention problems and greater social isolation due to reduced time with friends and family. Studies have proven that increased study of science and nature and increased outdoor time is extremely beneficial for cognitive functioning, reduced symptoms of attention deficit disorder, increased self-discipline and emotional well-being.

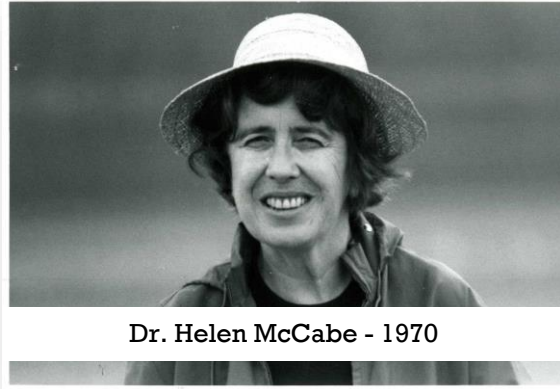


KEEN and Washington State Parks

KEEN holds a lease at to build the interpretive center at Helen McCabe State Park, the first recreational site that travelers encounter when driving southbound through the Canyon. Helen McCabe State Park is a natural location for an interpretive center to highlight the scenic byway resources. The Park was named after Dr. Helen McCabe who was a Professor of Recreation at Central Washington University and was a leader in recreation programs throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Acquired by the Washington State Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) in 1973, it is a 64-acre park that contains a half mile of riparian habitat along Wilson Creek and a 7-acre pond that is stocked with various fish species.

KEEN adopted and has been restoring habitat at Helen McCabe Park since 2004. Over the years, we have invested hundreds of volunteer hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars into habitat restoration.



Dr. Helen McCabe - 1970

Helen McCabe Memorial State Park is a former gravel borrow pit. By circumstance and synchronicity, KEEN came upon the park and identified it as a potential site for our planned Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center (Center).

KEEN has worked to re-establish native plant communities, build trails, teach outdoor classes, and expand the use and stewardship of the park. This park space is also a hub for much of our outreach in the greater Kittitas County area. KEEN and State Parks are now working together to expand and extend the existing lease another 50-years in order to ensure continuity, security of investment, and fiscal sustainability.

Located at the 'bottom of the bathtub' of the Yakima River Valley in Kittitas County, the park is home to critical ecosystem services; every drop of water in the valley filters through and under

the park. KEEN is working to bring this area back to functionality through our all-volunteer work on invasive species management, floodplain roughening, native planting and involvement of our community in restoration activities.

KEEN believes there are significant social and cultural benefits to functioning ecosystems and we work hard to increase the public use of the park by building trails, hosting work parties, offering a nature preschool, summer nature camps, and naturalist trainings/field trips. KEEN strives to educate the next generation of young adults to be ecologically aware, inform our local community, and create behavioral changes - ranging from basic ecological understanding to consumer and policy advocacy.

As the effects of climate change continue to manifest in our region – evidenced by lower snow pack and higher rainfall – KEEN’s efforts in this area become ever more appropriate. As we watch our endangered habitat become devalued and fragmented, the urgency of our work becomes more evident.

Although the size of the park is small, the impact of this project is huge. With over 1.5 million people driving past this park on an annual basis, we have an unparalleled opportunity to communicate important ecological information, provide a place to engage and reflect, and create a functioning ecosystem that provides true ecological services.

KEEN believes that it is our ethical and moral duty to educate and engage our community in its own environmental future. Having a restored area with ecosystem services, offering stepping-stone connectivity within the Yakima corridor, is a big part of that future.

We believe that having protected and rehabilitated areas on the edge of town are critical to connecting our community to nature, effecting change, and eliciting behavioral changes.

Why the Yakima River Canyon Is So Special

Though Washington is known as “the evergreen state” the shrub-steppe ecoregion has rainfall that is scarce enough that trees are hard-pressed to persist. The native habitats in this region are subtle, diverse, and highly endangered.

Approximately 10 million years ago the ridges and valleys of the Yakima Canyon fold belt started to form. This area was pressured simultaneously from the north and south causing it to be wrinkled like a table cloth being pushed together. As the ridges rose at the rate of a few inches per millennium, the Yakima River kept down-cutting its channel to maintain its established course. After a million years of uplift and simultaneous erosion, the river’s meandering course is now deeply entrenched. The shrub-steppe habitat that arose on the hillsides with a combination of acidic soils and low rainfall, is one of the world’s richest ecosystems and supports a wide variety of animal life.

The 26 miles of Yakima River in the canyon is the only Blue-Ribbon trout stream in Washington State. People from all over the world visit the Yakima Canyon to experience the beauty and superb catch-and-release trout river. The river’s healthy insect population supports 1,000 trout per river mile.

The Yakima Canyon is home to more than half the state’s wild bighorn sheep, with herds totaling nearly 800 animals. Susceptible to pneumonia, the Canyon herds have been hit hard by illness in the last decade. Townsend’s ground squirrels also make their home in the Canyon and are considered a candidate species for listing by WDFW and a federal species of concern.



The Audubon Society considers the Yakima Canyon to be an Important Bird Area with approximately 200 bird species visiting or residing there permanently. The riparian habitats along the Yakima River and feeder streams are host to many songbirds dependent on this habitat. The river itself is important for birds which prey on fish such as common mergansers, osprey, and belted kingfishers.

The area is perhaps best known for its nesting birds of prey. No fewer than 21 species of raptors have been recorded in the Yakima Canyon. American kestrels, red-tailed hawks, and prairie falcons are the most common breeding raptors and the bald eagle is one of the most conspicuous winter visitors. We now have several pairs nesting in the canyon. Great horned owls are the most common of the five species of owls that nest in the area.

The shrub-steppe is important habitat for the threatened sage-grouse. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates the Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) population in Washington was 1004 birds (386 males counted on 27 lek complexes) in 2015. Historically, these large grouse were abundant throughout Eastern Washington. Today, only two disjunct breeding populations remain; one in Douglas and Grant counties and another in Kittitas and Yakima counties.

The Yakima River is an important spawning and rearing area for numerous salmonid species and stocks, including fall Coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), spring and fall Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), summer steelhead (*O. mykiss*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluent*). Once numbering in the hundreds of thousands, the number of adult anadromous salmonids returning to spawn in the Yakima River Basin has been reduced by over an order of magnitude due to anthropogenic causes. Today, summer Chinook, sockeye, and native Coho are extinct in the basin (hatchery-bred Coho have been introduced).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, spring Chinook returns varied from 645 fish to more than 25,000. Fall Chinook returns averaged 2,000 to 4,000 fish, and Coho returns were between 1,000 and 2,000 fish. The Yakima Nation is working to rebuild the salmon and steelhead runs through a large-scale hatchery programs that produces juvenile fish for release into the wild in an experiment to rebuild naturally spawning runs.

The Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center strives to recognize, interpret and promote the intrinsic values of the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway by sharing the story of its natural and cultural history, its heritage.

Two fish species in the Yakima basin are listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act, bull trout and mid-Columbia steelhead.

The Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway is ceded land for the Yakama Nation. The tribal people comprising the Yakama Nation have lived in this area since the beginning of time. They used the entire land base, from the lowlands around the Columbia River to the snow-peaked Cascade Mountains.

Yakama people spent the coldest months in winter villages generally located on the valley floor, a place with a relatively moderate climate. A reliable source of wood and water, and protection from cold winds could be found there. Villages were located on or near waterways, in places where a variety of resources could be obtained including deer, elk, fish, riparian and desert plants, and animal resources.

In the springtime, as soon as the first edible greens appeared above the ground, tribal peoples began moving across the countryside for fresh food resources. The melting snows would be



followed upland, and edible roots collected as they matured. Some tribal people would go to the rivers to fish. Others would remain in the mountains, following the maturing plants upslope, ending with the huckleberry harvest in the fall. At that time, foods would be either stored or transported back to the winter village from both the mountains and the rivers, and people would settle in, once more living on stored foods and occasional fresh meat until the next spring.

Bordering the reservation, the Yakima River flows southward from the Cascade Mountains to the

Columbia River. Along the river there is a pass, a gap in Ahtanum Ridge called Union Gap. The Yakima River flowed through this area before the ridges existed. The Toppenish Basin is shaped like a scoop that is open to the east. The higher sides of the scoop are Ahtanum Ridge to the North, Toppenish ridge to the south and the Lost Horse Plateau to the west. Located along the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range, the Yakama Nation forest consists of 600,000 acres of timbered lands. The Yakama Nation has a very rich history and culture, for more information visit their cultural center located in Toppenish WA.

In 1967 the State Legislature established the scenic and recreational byway system and identified the 25 miles of SR821 through the Yakima River Canyon as a scenic byway – the first

designated Byway in the state. The byway, which starts on the north end near Ellensburg at Helen McCabe Park and continues south to Selah Creek near Yakima, contains important natural, recreational, and cultural resources that have intrinsic value for our local community and visitors alike.

Today, less than 50% of Washington's historic shrub-steppe remains, and much of it is degraded, fragmented, and isolated from other similar habitats. Across the Intermountain West, shrub-steppe communities have been lost or degraded by conversion to cropland, extensive energy extraction, and alteration of the vegetation through over-grazing, invasion by exotic plants and changes in fire frequency.

Anthropogenic changes in these unique habitats have caused severe declines in species like the greater sage-grouse and have led to the extirpation of the pygmy rabbit in Washington. Other shrub-steppe-associated species that are likely on the decline include the Washington ground squirrel, Brewer's sparrow, and burrowing owl. Conversion of shrub-steppe to cropland and other uses is responsible for much of the observed declines in native species; however, the pattern of habitat loss and how remaining habitat is configured on the landscape likely plays a significant role in determining use by wildlife.



Mission of the Interpretive Center

The Center will serve as a resource to visitors and community members, provide science-based education for all ages, and connect our community to nature. The Center will encourage community partnerships and foster an appreciation and understanding of the incredible natural and cultural wealth found in Kittitas and Yakima Counties especially emphasizing the connections represented by the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway - the first designated byway in Washington State.

As visitors travel west toward Seattle, the Center will offer interpretation of the lands they've passed through and introduce them to the forests to come. For visitors traveling east and south to recreate, the Center will expand their understanding of the value of arid lands. For our local communities the Center will help increase the livability of our region, provide jobs, and promote economic development and diversity of our tourism industry.

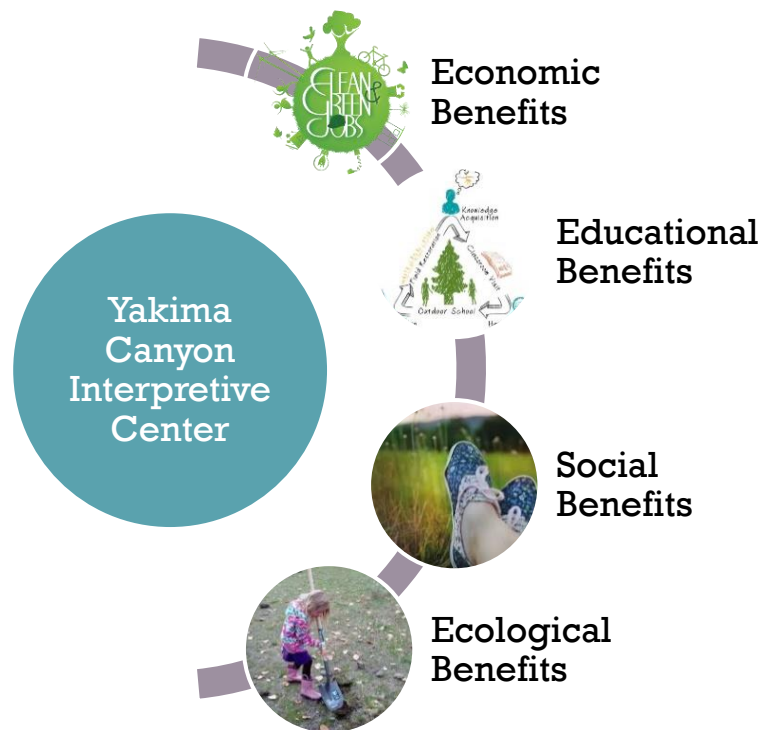
The Center will provide quality environmental education and recreational experiences while maintaining a balanced emphasis on stewardship of the land, water, wildlife, cultural, and historic resources of the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway.



The original 1968 Corridor Management Plan for the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway (YRCSB) indicated that an interpretive visitor's center should be located at the mouth of the Canyon at Helen McCabe Park.

Community Need and Benefit

Interpretive and visitor centers that provide environmental education opportunities offer numerous benefits to the surrounding communities including positive changes to the economic, education, social, and ecological systems.



Economic Benefits to our Community

- Property values increase in areas surrounding interpretive centers
- Employment and volunteer opportunities are provided to community members
- Purchasing power of goods and services
- Valued amenities – promoted by real estate agents and Chambers of Commerce
- Destination for tourism promotions
- Revenue generation – rentals, gift shop sales
- Entertainment, education, and recreation value
- Attract regional visitors who patronize local businesses
- Positive influence on community development planning

Educational Benefits to our Community

- Natural, environmental, and outdoor education curriculum that helps students with graduation standards in science, math, art, and more
- Intern training sites for college naturalist and teacher programs
- Teaching of ethical stewardship of the Earth

- Hands-on science and habitat restoration
- Life-long learning opportunities
- Service learning for teens and university students

Social Benefits for our Community

- Location for special events and festivals hosted by the Center
- Location for special event and festival rentals
- Wedding and private party location
- Fishing and water access to pond
- Provide opportunities to exercise in a beautiful outdoor natural setting
- Stress relief
- Green space for solitude and contemplation
- Joyful experiences viewing and encountering wildlife
- Social walking, running and cross-country skiing
- Gathering place for families and guests, picnics
- Community meeting place
- Volunteer interactions – work parties, docent program

Ecological Benefits for our Community

- Habitat restoration of a degraded landscape
- Control of invasive plant species
- Watershed protection
- Habitat for local flora and fauna
- Provide a site for long-term biological research
- Connectivity of landscapes and habitat for endangered animals and plants

Market Research

There are currently 2 nearby interpretive centers within 50 miles of the Center and 3 more in the broader area of Eastern Washington. While each has its own focus and specialty, they all generally include preservation, conservation, protection, education, and stewardship in their mission. The following chart details the operating hours and estimated number of annual visitors (not all centers collect visitation data).

Nature Center	Owned/ Operated By	Operating Hours	Weekly Hours	Estimated Annual Visitors	Estimated Annual Students
Wildhorse Windfarm Visitors Center	Puget Sound Energy	9:00-5:30 Daily April - November	59.5	25,000	Information not available
Yakima Arboretum	Private Non- Profit	9am to 5pm, Monday-Saturday	48	10,000 (paid visitors) 100,000+ to the grounds	1,600
Yakama Nation Cultural Center	Yakama Nation	7 days a week	48	9,800	1,000
Dry Falls Interpretive Center	WA State Parks and Recreation Department	Monday-Sunday 9am-4pm (very limited winter hours)	49	Information not available	Information not available
The Reach at Hanford	Richland Public Facilities Board	Tuesday - Saturday 10am-4pm Sunday 12- 4pm	29	12,892	5,759
Wanapum Heritage Center	Grant County Public Utilities District	M-F 8:30am- 4:30pm Sat-Sun 9am-5pm	56	22,000 (in addition to visitors to mobile unit)	500

Expected Audience

The Center expects a wide variety of visitors. Located at the intersection of two interstate highways, at the gateway to the first scenic byway in Washington State, and just 5 miles south of Ellensburg,

The Center anticipates 100,000 visitors annually.

Planning for distinct audiences and their specific needs is a priority for the Center. Our anticipated audience breaks down to four categories:

- 1) Tourists (people traveling from more than 50 miles away)
- 2) Local and state-wide K-12 students
- 3) Central Washington University (CWU) Students and Faculty
- 4) General community members from Central Washington State

Each audience will have different needs. Visitors to the Byway, who may not be staying long in the area, will be expecting educational experiences that are quick, engaging and easily digestible.

K-12 students will have a curriculum that is built to meet core standards and coordinate with classroom priorities to ensure that teachers and school districts can take advantage of experiential and hands-on outdoor-based learning opportunities.

The needs of CWU students and faculty are somewhat different and the Educational Master Plan will focus on establishing long-term scientific studies on site, providing practicums and experience providing educational programming to area schools and community members at the Center.

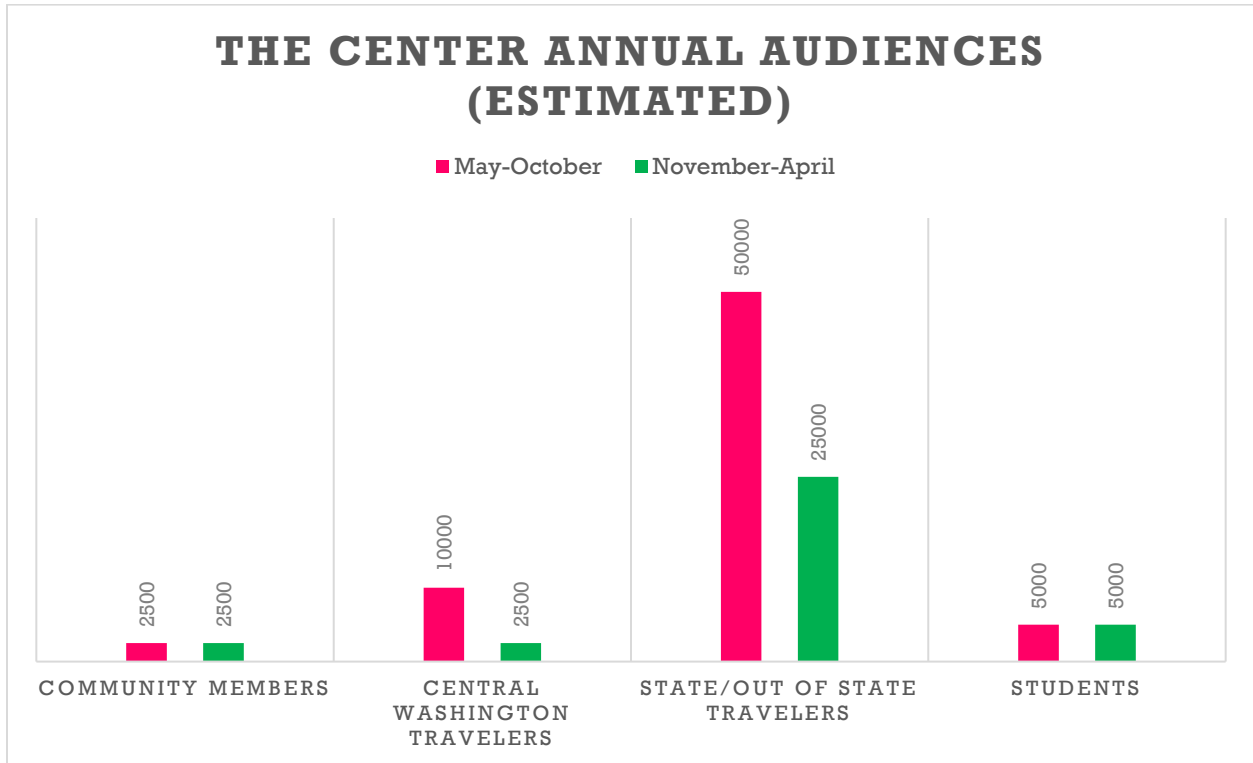
Educational opportunities for general community members will focus on expert-led field trips on the site and in the Canyon,

The Center anticipates 100,000 visitors annually.

This is approximately 10% of the 1.5 million drivers who travel the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway on an annual basis.

The Center is located at the intersection of two interstates, I-90 and I-82. Of the 5.5 million drivers passing Ellensburg annually, approximately 1% of those turn off to the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway.

lectures, and other place-based educational opportunities.



Center Program Development

While the construction and operation of the Interpretive Center is a primary goal of KEEN, it is essentially the development of the programs the Center will provide that are at the heart of KEEN's mission to interpret the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway and to provide environmentally based education, recreation, and conservation opportunities for all. It is through the programs that "a sense of place" experience for visitors will ultimately occur.

In keeping with KEEN's commitment to community partnerships, program development will be tightly linked to community input and participation. Opportunities abound for a wide variety of programs to be developed within the framework of the theme of the Center.

Program development will be:

- Focused within the Center theme
- Responsive to Community input
- Varied and flexible
- Objective based

Interpreting the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway allows for the almost endless development of programs. Programs will be developed to meet the needs of byway travelers and every segment of the community at large. This will require actively seeking community input and participation in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of programs. There are numerous, seasonal and community events around which programs can be designed, either in conjunction with, in addition to, or as an enhancement for. Environmental programs designed in affiliation with public education will follow current national environmental education curricula.

Our [Interpretive Master Plan](#) outlines the educational themes and focus areas for the Center.

Revenue Generating Programs

The Center will also explore the development of these revenue-generating services and programs:

Lecture Series: Local topic area experts will be invited to hold public presentations and talks on nature or sustainability focused information on topics ranging, but not limited to, flora & fauna, geology, water resources, habitat restoration, sustainable living, renewable energy.

Art Exhibits and Public Art: Local artists will be given the opportunity to showcase feature works on local landscapes, nature, and wildlife. In addition to drawing a broader audience to the Center, we will collect a commission on the sale of each piece.

Private Parties and Nature-Themed Parties: We will develop a child's birthday party program that will be targeted towards children aged 4-10. The program will include fun, engaging activities like a nature hunt, bingo games, nature crafts, and pond "experiments". Center staff will develop the program, provide the materials, and volunteer docents will staff the parties.

Meeting Room and Facility Rentals: Rooms will be available for rentals during the week for meetings and other small events. There will be a lower non-profit rate and the Center members will be able to reserve the facility for meetings at a reduced rate.

Gift Shop/Bookstore: In addition to nature books and field guides, our bookstore will offer more unique and higher margin items such as locally made nature-inspired jewelry, art, and note cards, as well as Center logoed items and educational toys. Gift shops are a huge percentage of total revenue for the Center and will be a focus of our annual planning.

Weddings: Wedding space within the Center or on the grounds will likely be in high demand. The Center will evaluate the cost structures that will fit within our market for wedding rentals.

Summer Concert Series: The Center staff will investigate scheduling outdoor concerts after opening.

Plant Sale: Plants grown at the Center will be made available for purchase at yearly events or alternately we may host other group's local plant sales and add our items into the sale.

Campground: walk-in camping was considered as part of the original Corridor Management Plan for the byway and there is a great need for camping locations along the Scenic Byway. The opportunity for camping will be evaluated after the Center is open.

Outdoor Kindergarten: there is the possibility for a qualified concessionaire to operate a private outdoor kindergarten on site. Proposals will be requested and evaluated once the Center is open.

Wine-Tasting and Food Concessionaires: this will likely be a future project in a second phase of privately-funded construction at the site. This may potentially be a lease of a flat fee for the space plus 10% of sales.

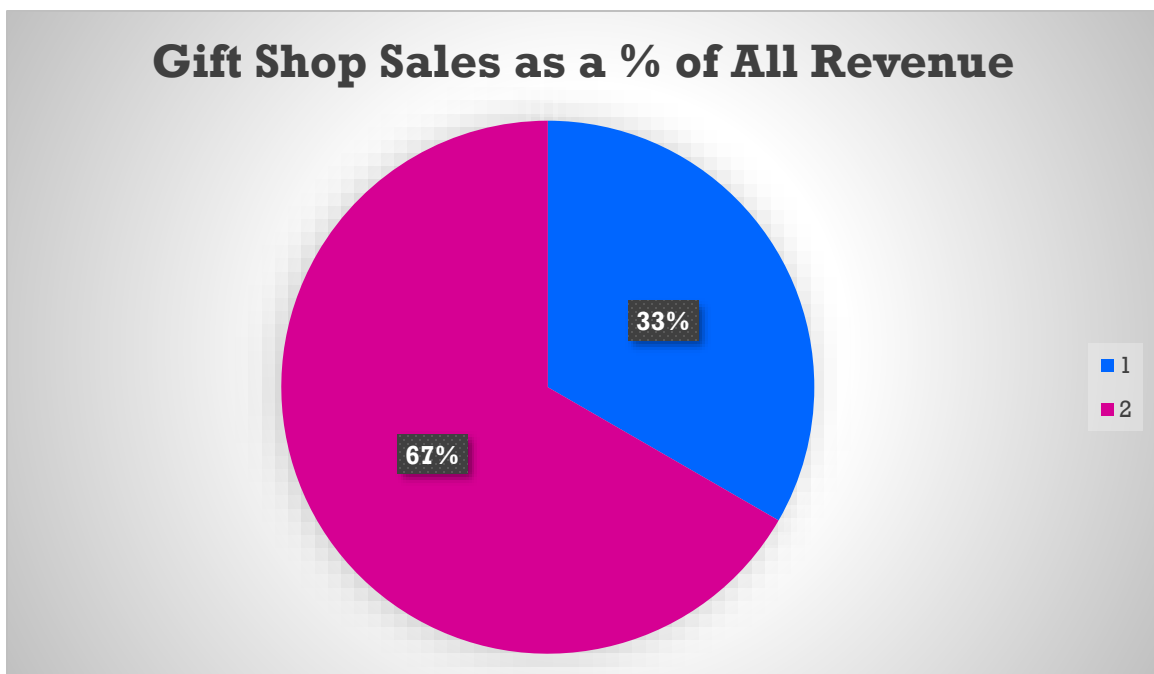


Center Staffing

Center Director: A professional Director will oversee operations of the Center. She/he will be responsible for implementing the policies and procedures that are developed and by the KEEN's board of directors, revenue programs, marketing, and overall operations. The Director will manage the professional staff of the Center staff.

Environmental Education Director: The EE Director position will recruit and train volunteers for various duties at the Center, research and design interpretive materials, organize public programs in coordination with partner organizations and operate our educational programming overall. This position will work closely with the school districts to develop educational programs that integrate with their curriculum; reach out to the school districts within the target area to attract students to the program; work with surrounding community and partner organizations to accumulate a group of dedicated volunteers who will staff the Center, lead educational tours, and implement many of the community programs; and train the education program staff.

Annual Fund Director and Fundraising Staff: These positions will grow as the organization grows. We anticipate at least 1 full-time position to assist with securing annual funds, memberships, grants, and other funding programs.



Education Program Staff: Educational Programs will be conducted by professional staff. KEEN Summer camps, afterschool programs, and programs for adults will be planned and operated by up to 20 seasonal staff. We anticipate at least 5 full-time positions to operate educational programming throughout the year.

Center Facility Manager and Staff (up to 5 part-time positions with one full-time manager): The Center will be open 7 days per week and will be staffed for all open hours. Volunteer positions will also be created to assist with welcome and facility management services.

Citizen Scientists/Community Program Volunteers: Community programs such as a lecture series, biodiversity studies, long-term monitoring, interpretive walks, and more will be developed and implemented by program volunteers.

Gift Store Coordinator and Staff: Coordinating the gift store is a full-time position and up to 5 additional part-time employees will help with managing the inventory to maximize sales and profits. As a notable source of revenue generation, these positions will work directly with the Center Director.

Special Revenue Program Coordinators: Community fundraising events are often headed up by an enthusiastic volunteer with a passion. We expect that among our diverse volunteer base, we will have many such individuals and we anticipate and have budgeted for a native plant sale in year one. As another important source of revenue generation, special revenue program volunteers will work directly with the Center Director.

Marketing Strategy

The four primary goals of the marketing strategy include:

1. Increasing involvement in our educational programs
2. Increasing visits to the Center
3. Increasing paid membership
4. Engaging docents and other volunteers

Achieving these goals will require an understanding of the interests and motivations of each audience and the development of a unique communications and outreach strategy to target each audience.

Education Programs

It will be especially important to understand what the local education community is looking for as the education program is developed. In order to do this, our Education and Outreach Specialist will ask for input from several local school districts early in the program development phase, in order to ensure that the educational programs will meet their needs. Once the educational programs are developed, the Education and Outreach Specialist will personally introduce our educational programs to target school districts, sharing the program details and benefits and leaving behind brochures for distribution.



Public visits, membership, and soliciting volunteers

To attract visitors, members, and volunteers who are already interested in conservation and nature, we will reach out to other environmental and community organizations. In the months immediately preceding and following the Center opening, the Director will contact and visit with other environmental and community organizations to share information about our Center programs and services and leave behind brochures for distribution to each organization's members.

The Director will regularly write and distribute press releases to announce the Center opening,

invite visitors, and promote our community events. We already enjoy good relationships with local media and have had much success getting coverage of our events.

Once at the Center, visitors will see ample communication about the importance of and benefits to becoming a member. Communications will include a display and brochures.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
connects us to the world around us, teaches us about the connections between and within natural and built systems, and provides context for relationships with our surroundings. Our community's future relies on a well-educated public to be wise stewards of the very environment that sustains us, our families, and future generations.

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
40% of every donation goes to our YCIC capital campaign fund, 40% for programming and 20% for YCIC design.

Over 5,000 community members connected to nature last year alone!

Support KEEN's Outdoor Nature School programs!

When your donation is joined with others it becomes a legacy for our community and future generations. Support KEEN and YCIC Today!

HELP CONNECT your community TO NATURE

KEEN
414 South Willow Street
Ellensburg, WA 98926
kittitasee@gmail.com
www.ycic.org
509-551-8807

WWW.YCIC.ORG **509-551-8807**

THE KITTITAS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NETWORK

#KITTITASEE
For 20 years the Kittitas Environmental Education Network (KEEN) has been inspiring a nature-based ethic in our community with unique outdoor educational programs, hands-on habitat restoration, and creating a sense of place for learners of all ages.

#YCIC
KEEN's work to restore habitat at Helen McCabe Park, and our plans to establish the Yakima Canyon Interpretive Center, there are great examples of why the Kittitas Valley is a thriving and vibrant place to live, work, and raise a family.

THREE WAYS TO DO GOOD
Fast and convenient. You can also set up recurring gifts.
www.ycic.org
CALL US
509-551-8807

DONATE TODAY **KEEN** **HELP KEEN BREAK THE INDOOR HABIT & GET KIDS OUTSIDE!**

CONNECT TO PLACE
It is environmental education which can best help us as individuals make the complex, conceptual connections between economic prosperity, benefits to society, environmental health, and our own well-being.

YAKIMA CANYON INTERPRETIVE CENTER MISSION
To educate and inspire current and future generations to explore, respect, and restore nature.
We foster respect for nature;
We thrive outdoors;
We guide learning;
We create ecological literacy.

Thank You!

Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution of \$ _____

Designate my gift to: Camp YCIC Operations

Donor Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Email: _____

This gift is: In Memory Of In Celebration Of
Person or Event to be recognized: _____
Mailing Address: _____

Payment Method
Credit Card: Visa MC Amex
CSW Expiration: _____
Signature: _____
My check is enclosed and payable to KEEN

Return this donation form with your check or credit card information to:
KEEN
414 South Willow Street
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Our Commitment to You
We will honor your generosity by using your donation in the most effective way possible. Thank you for creating a legacy, for supporting environmental education, for connecting your community to nature.

KEEN is an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
Our Federal EIN is 22-889922

Marketing Tools

Brochures: A Center brochure will be designed to generate visitors and interest among the general public, as well as encourage the reader to become a member and/or volunteer. Because this same brochure will not have enough space to adequately communicate the benefits and features of our educational program, we will utilize a separate brochure to introduce these programs to the education community.

Website: We will design and maintain a dedicated Center website. The site will feature the Center facility itself, the educational and community programs, and the value/benefits of becoming a member. It will enable the visitor to donate online. The website will be linked to our partner organizations as well.

Newsletter: We will publish a quarterly electronic newsletter as soon as we begin acquiring members and volunteers. Before the Center opens, the newsletter will provide updates on the building progress, new partnerships, volunteer opportunities, and volunteer training programs. Once the Center opens, the newsletter will also update members and volunteers on the programs and events taking place at the Center.

Volunteer Training

Because the Center will rely exclusively on volunteers to staff the front counter and lead the educational tours, developing a comprehensive volunteer training program will be critical.



Fundraising Strategy

Naming Opportunities

KEEN welcomes several different levels of donation for naming opportunities at the Center. Among the initial offerings are:

Legacy Opportunity	Number of Opportunities	Amount
YCIC Building	1	\$4.625 million
Main Hall	1	\$1 million
Display Areas	Multiple	\$500,000
Science Lab/Classrooms	2	\$500,000
Education Rooms	1	\$250,000
Entry Areas	2	\$150,000
Wildlife Viewing Areas	Multiple	\$100,000
Trail System/Loops	Multiple	\$100,000
Outdoor Classrooms	Multiple	\$75,000
Dock and Viewing Platforms	Multiple	\$50,000
Bird & Butterfly Native Plant Gardens	Multiple	\$45,000
Picnic Areas	4	\$35,000
Habitat Restoration Areas	10	\$10,000
Outdoor Benches and Seating	20	\$1,000
Basalt Stones with Engraved Names	500	\$500
Outdoor Interpretive Signage	500	\$200

Annual Fund

An *Annual Fund* is an organized effort to obtain gifts on a yearly basis to support, at least in part, the general operations. These unrestricted funds are typically raised through a combination of special events, direct mail, grant writing, and direct solicitation. The donor does not receive any tangible benefit – it is a true philanthropic process.

An Annual Fund:

- Generates reasonably predictable funds to pay for ongoing operating expenses
- Creates a solid donor base of supporters who give year after year
- Provides opportunities to cultivate donors and build relationships for the future
- Creates a pool of potential volunteers
- Educates your audience about your organization and your mission

In order to implement an Annual Fund, KEEN will make an initial investment in some long-term infrastructure. KEEN will dedicate staff time to manage, plan and implement the annual campaign each year, and good donor-tracking software to maintain adequate records.

The success of the Annual Fund is directly related to the support it receives from the leadership of the organization, both from the Executive Director and Board of Directors. KEEN will have 100% giving from our Board to ensure the success of the campaign in the community.

Memberships

KEEN has had a general membership program for the last 20 years, but it has not been a large part of our operations. This mostly relates to not having a set of 'benefits' for those who chose to become members. Once the Center is constructed, KEEN can think through the critical questions:

- What role will members play in the Center?
- How will we provide membership benefits?
- How will our members contribute to the success of the Center?
- Is the purpose of our program fundraising, advocacy, or community-building, or something else?

Once we determine benefits, we can focus in on membership fees that we would use to:

- Boost the annual fund.
- Benefit a specific campaign.
- Cover the cost of membership benefits.
- Keep the office up and running.
- Develop new programs.
- Endow a grant or scholarship.

Membership benefits will ensure that we keep our members engaged at an interactive level and maintain connections with them on a regular basis. Benefits may include discounted prices to events, discounted rental fees, and:

- Offering members-only newsletters and discounted subscriptions to our publications.
- Providing special access, like early event registration, free raffle tickets, or extended bidding time.
- Hosting member community-building activities, such as special events or meetings.
- Giving exclusive discounts to products, services, or event tickets.
- Presenting members with a physical or digital membership card.

Online Fundraising Strategy

KEEN and the Center organizations will have a robust online fundraising strategy including websites, e-mail, crowdfunding campaigns and more. Below are some strategies we are considering.

The most attractive online fundraising strategies today are crowdfunding and social media. But the true workhorse of online fundraising has always been – and continues to be – e-mail.

People come and go on our website, and we never know who they are. We send out Facebook updates and tweets regularly, but 90% of our followers never see our messages. But almost everyone checks their e-mail inbox every day. E-mail offers us the best way to engage with our donors and prospects online.

For this reason, everything we do online will be geared towards collecting e-mail addresses. Our website includes an e-mail newsletter sign-up box front and center on every page. Our social media updates will constantly drive people back to our website, where they can sign-up for our e-mail newsletter. We will collect e-mail addresses relentlessly and use them to stay in touch and raise money from our donors on a regular basis.

In order to make the most out of our web presence, we will create a website that keeps donors and prospects coming back week after week and month after month.

We will keep our website constantly updated with information our donors want to see. We will include updates on our work, stories from the field, staff, client and donor profiles, videos and pictures, event information...anything and everything a donor or prospect might be interested in seeing.

We will remind our donors about the wealth of information on our site. They will be referred there constantly in our newsletters, e-mails, on social media, and at events. We will make our website a place that donors *want* to visit, because they know they will find something new and interesting every time they come by.

Why 15 minutes per day, per social media network? Because 15 minutes is enough time to post a couple of updates and engage with our followers, without being so long that we are wasting time doing things that don't provide any rewards. There are amazing opportunities to meet, cultivate, solicit, and steward donors online.

Permanent Endowment

For KEEN and the Center to be sustainable entities and ensure that our work can continue through funding droughts or economic downturns, we will establish a permanent endowment fund. The fund will allow us to access at least 6 months of operational funds. We will establish this endowment by taking the following steps:

- Implement an organizational business plan based on responsible financial planning and management
- Create an adequate cash-reserve fund prior to addressing the endowment
- Determine the amount of revenue and profit to contribute to the endowment fund on a monthly or annual basis
- Work with our investment manager to establish reasonable return on our endowment fund
- Incorporate cash-reserve and endowment components into capital campaigns and regular fundraising efforts; tout those accounts to grant makers



Financials and Resource Requirements - Assumptions

Visitor Assumptions

The Center objectives during the first year of operation are:

- Attract approximately 80,000 general public visitors
- Serve approximately 3,500 K-12 students
- Serve approximately 1,000 visitors through our community programs, partnering with at least 4 different organizations
- Generate \$780,000 in earned revenue from a combination of membership fees, programming, outreach, retail sales, and special events.
- Secure \$130,000 in funding sources including foundation grants, government grants, and private and corporate donation.
- Generate \$180,000 in concessionaire rentals
- Generate \$45,500 in event rentals
- Generate \$300,000 in gift shop sales
- Create and implement a comprehensive volunteer training program.

Revenue Assumptions

- Members represent 1% of visitors
 - Year 1, 2%
 - Year 2, 3%
 - Year 3, 5%
 - Membership contributions average \$35 per member, per year
- Donations at Door: 25% of visitors give an average of \$1.
- Concessions revenue from 25% of visitors spending \$10.50 each.
- Bookstore revenue from 10% of visitors spending an average of \$10.
- All other revenue increases by 2% annually.

Calculations for Other Revenue

- Room Rentals are calculated with an expected charge of \$75-\$250 per hour for evening rentals (\$50-\$200 for daytime rentals). Using the lower-end estimate of \$75/hour, we estimate 3 evening rentals each month of 2 hours each (\$450 per month or ~\$5,000/year).
- Weddings will be charged at \$500 for 4 hours. With 10 weddings per year, the annual revenue is expected to be \$5,000. Increase in wedding rentals will occur with private investment or private grants are used to construct a different facility on the Center grounds.
- Art Exhibits will provide a commission of 20% per piece sold (estimated at \$100), with an expected sale of 1 piece per month.
- Adult Education will be charged at \$10/person per session or \$60 for a 6-week series. 20

people are expected to attend a series, which held be twice a year, providing annual revenue of \$2,400.

- Birthday Parties will be charged at \$150 per party, with 2 parties expected per month, resulting in \$3,600 annual revenue.
- The Plant Sale will generate \$5-\$10 per plant. Assuming 250 people buy 3 plants each, at \$5 per plant, this results in \$3,750 in annual revenue.
- Summer Community Concert Series will charge \$5 admission. Assuming 50 people attend 2 concerts per month, this will generate \$1,500 during the 3 months of summer. This revenue will not be attainable until the amphitheater is completed in Year 2.

Expense Assumptions

- Expenses increase by 2% annually, excluding concessions, bookstore, and marketing.
- Center Director is paid for 6 months in Year 1 (this is the only expense incurred that year). Director will work out of a home office while The Center is under construction.
- Concessions and bookstore operate at a 50% margin, or 100% mark-up

