

History

Because where we come from is important

SOLVE has been around, and doing good work, for quite a long time. The organization originally called S.O.L.V. (Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism) was created by Governor Tom McCall and other community leaders in 1969 to address the need for community action in the ever-growing state. Today SOLVE is building on their vision with a strategic plan that will guide us as we continue to work to improve the environment of Oregon and build a legacy of stewardship.

The Early Years

"Red Hat Days" and "Keep Oregon Green" both have a place in SOLV's history. In the 1950's, Irv Luiten, of the Izaak Walton League's Portland Chapter, helped found "Red Hat Days" to educate sportsmen to fight litter and vandalism, respect property rights and obey fish and game laws. The successful effort eventually became a nationwide program. Discussions followed to form a broader organization patterned after "Keep Oregon Green" with its public-private support and local involvement.

1969

SOLV was founded in 1969 by Oregon Governor Tom McCall and other business and community leaders to address litter and vandalism problems throughout the state. SOLV's early years centered on its first statewide community cleanup campaigns and its first public information program that included brochures, slide shows, educational course materials and a speakers' program. The message in those initial materials: "Be a SOLVer. Help stop Oregon litter and vandalism."



SOLV programs in the 1970's included distribution of 50,000 anti-litter and vandalism coloring books to Oregon schools; annual statewide spring cleanups and ongoing countywide cleanups, distribution of 50,000 paper litter bags for automobiles and 50,000 plastic litter bags for outdoor sportsman. During this time, SOLV also began receiving state and national recognition for its work – with many prestigious honors to follow over the years.

1971

Youth were a big part of SOLV's activities in the 1970's. A contest involving the state's school children resulted in the SOLV "stop sign" logo, designed by South Eugene High School senior Melvin Terry. The contest is remembered by many Oregonians, even today.



1984

Judy Nielson, an employee of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), attends a conference on plastics in the marine environment. She conceives the idea of statewide volunteer beach cleanups to call attention to the proliferation of plastic debris in the natural environment and asks SOLV for help in recruiting volunteers. The world's first statewide volunteer beach cleanup is held on October 13, 1984, under the title "Plague of Plastics". Local coastal garbage haulers get involved and volunteer to haul all collected debris to local landfills at no charge. 2,100 volunteers remove 26.3 tons of debris at that first beach cleanup.



1986

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the Oregon Department of Transportation suggest adding spring beach cleanups to tidy up beaches for summer visitors. Twice yearly beach cleanups have taken place every year since.

1990

SOLV IT was created to clean up Portland area neighborhoods and address the problem of illegal dumpsites. Since 1990, volunteers have removed more than 9 million pounds of natural and manmade debris and litter from illegal dumpsites, neighborhoods and natural areas. SOLV IT has become one of the largest Earth Day events of its kind in the nation. Also in 1990, SOLV hired its first part-time Executive Director, Jack McGowan.

1994

SOLV begins to coordinate the Oregon Adopt-A-River program in partnership with the Oregon State Marine Board. The program came about as a result of a bill passed by the Oregon Legislature to help address litter problems on the state's waterways.



1996

Down By The Riverside, a statewide waterway cleanup and enhancement day begins after record flooding hits the state, leaving tons of debris and damaged public areas. Governor John Kitzhaber declared June 24-29 Oregon Rivers Week, saying, "Oregon rivers, streams and lakes are crucial to the state's recreation, economy and scenic beauty."

1997

The INTEL-SOLV Washington County Clean & Green Project kicks off as a result of Intel's interest in getting its employees involved with other volunteers to enhance local communities. The first year involves 1,100 volunteers at 47 project sites. Projects include stream and wetland restoration, litter cleanup, yard work for those in need of social services and storm drain stenciling.

SOLV creates Volunteer Action Training to prepare local leaders to identify community needs and address them through volunteerism. Nearly 1,500 Oregonians will go through the training in the next 6 years.

1998

TriMet asks SOLV to create a program to address rider concerns about litter at bus stops and along transit routes, especially in communities in North and Northeast Portland. The N/NE Community Action Program is born, featuring the Adopt-A-Stop project.



In partnership with U.S. Bank, SOLV creates the Best of Oregon Program and begins intensive work to assist the needs of rural economically distressed communities

1999

SOLV begins a new program, Team Up for Watershed Health, to provide opportunities for volunteers to get involved in watershed restoration projects in the Portland metropolitan area.



A record 7,200 volunteers turn out for the Great Oregon Spring Beach Cleanup and remove 42 tons of debris from the coast.

2001

1,000 volunteers join in the SOLV Oregon Legacy Walk, a 7-week hike led by SOLV Directors Jack and Jan McGowan, along the entire Oregon Coastline. The event raises awareness about the precious natural areas SOLV volunteers strive to preserve, and funds for an endowment, the Gift to Oregon Fund, to support SOLV volunteers for generations to come.

2003

Down By The Riverside smashes previous one-day event records by involving over 11,500 people at 300 project sites around the state who tackled all types of improvement projects on or near state waterways. Over 2 million pounds of trash, debris and non-native species are collected and removed from around the state.



2004

SOLV celebrates its 35-year anniversary along with the State of Oregon's birthday on February 14. SOLV and its programs are expected to provide more than 90,000 volunteer opportunities around the state. SOLV volunteers and projects benefit more than 250 communities throughout Oregon.

2005

SOLV's Earth Day Cleanup, SOLV IT, is one of the nation's largest Earth Day events. Presented by Portland General Electric, the event drew 2,800 volunteers at 102-sites in 5 counties, who cleaned up 258 tons of waste. By year end, SOLV tallies over 80,000 volunteer opportunities in more than 250 communities statewide, including over 100 volunteer leaders trained through Volunteer Action Training.



2006

In partnership with The Ford Family Foundation, SOLV facilitates the new leadership and community service program for middle and high school youth called Youth Leadership through Community Building. Additionally, SOLV and Intel Oregon announced the award of an Intel Foundation education grant to support a pilot service-learning program, Equipo Verde (Green Team), in partnership with the OSU Extension 4-H “Tech Wizards” program in the Forest Grove School District. Over the 2005-2006 school year; 200 student projects were completed in 28 of Oregon’s 36 counties, 6,000 students participated in Down By The Riverside, and SOLV’s education program staff addressed over 700 educators, students, and community partners in service-learning trainings, workshops and conferences.



2012

SOLVE unveils a new logo that more accurately reflects the work of the organization - the active participation of volunteers choosing to SOLVE. We hope you like the new look as much as we do!

2016

SOLVE continues to grow its programs across the state leading successful volunteer events that keep Oregon a clean and healthy place to live.

