



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

## The WaterShed

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THE WATERSHED

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# MISSION

*Increasing water and climate change awareness and inspiring action by teaching people of all ages how to protect and conserve our precious natural resources for future generations.*

## Strategic Highlights

- Reopened as the nation's first climate and water science center
- Increased climate engagement opportunities
- Developed three new K-12 lessons using place-based learning framework
- Fabricated four innovation station exhibit hall activities

## Financial Highlights

- Secured \$34,900 in grant funding
- Provided \$3,084 in bus grants to 14 schools
- Offered free admission to all visitors

## Operating Highlights

- Expanded hours to include Saturdays
- Added accessibility features: sensory backpacks, ASL videos and NaviLens





# VISITATION

The WaterShed had a record attendance year in 2025 due to the transformation and reopening of the exhibit hall. Even with the exhibit hall being closed from January - mid-March for exhibit installation, there were more people who visited than in any other year prior.

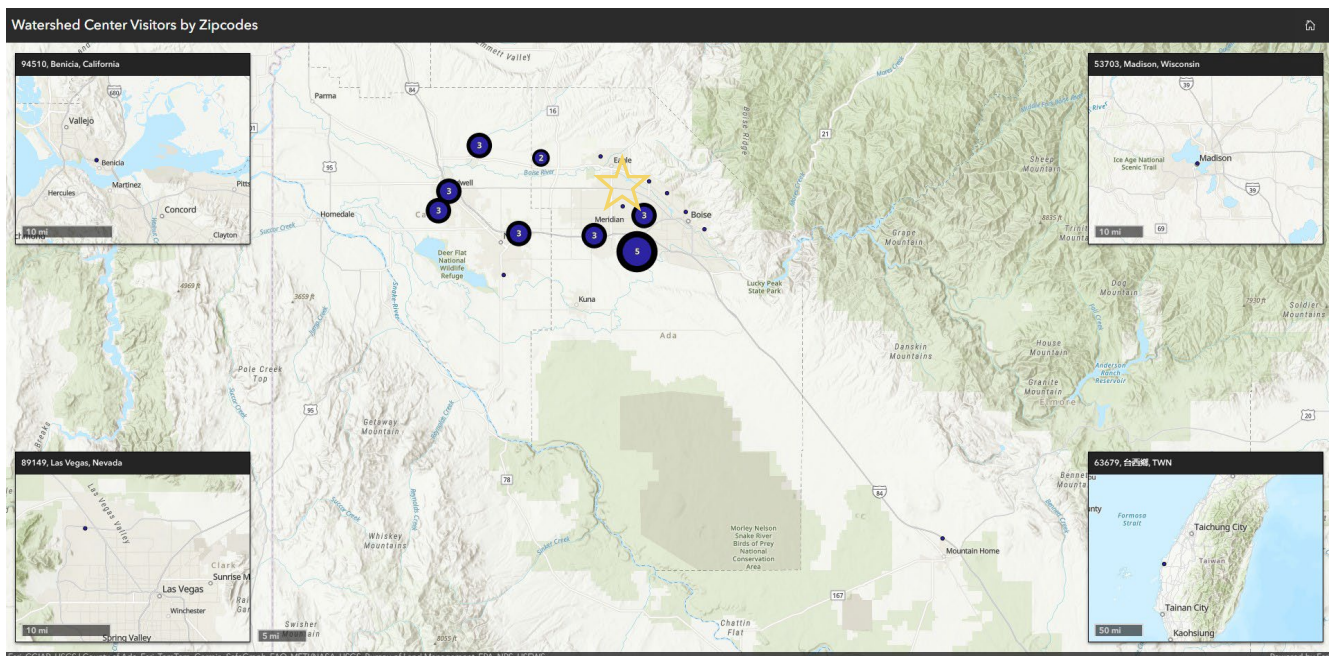
***602% increase in walk-in visitors***

**Total number of people educated in 2025: 40,123**

- 29,358 on-site visitors
- 10,765 off-site outreach



There were more than 13,500 visitors that dropped in to explore the exhibits this past year. A small sample size of visitor zip codes taken from survey results indicated that they live in the following communities:



## School Visits

267 On-site field Trips were conducted for 9,493 students in 2025.

Groups were comprised of the following types of organizations:

- 32% Boise School District
- 15% Homeschool groups
- 10% West Ada School District
- 9% Nampa School District
- 9% Charter Schools
- 9% Private Schools
- 7% Vallivue School District
- <4% Middleton, Caldwell, Kuna, Bruneau, Weiser, Twin Falls, Emmett, and Basin School Districts

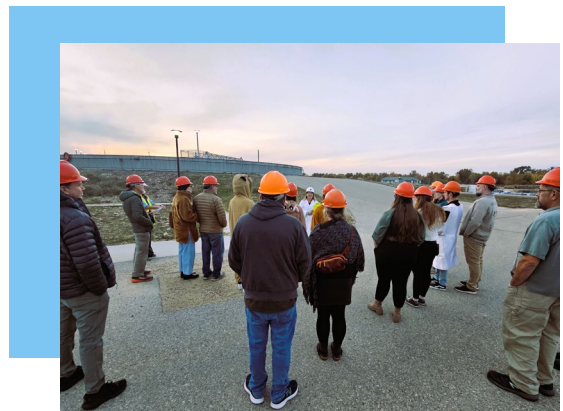
Our farthest school-age visitors have come from: Twin Falls School District (138 miles), Weiser School District (70 miles) and Basin School District / Idaho City (50 miles).

## Group Visits

In addition to schoolyear field trips, there were 86 daycares and camps educated in the summer.

Adult groups comprise about 15% of our annual group visits. WaterShed staff educated 30 adult groups, plus 8 college classes. Notably, there were 4 groups of adults who experience blindness or low-vision. A majority of adult groups request water renewal tours. Staff led 44 water renewal tours in 2025.

***“It was an excellent field trip. Our facilitators were great at explaining and engaging the students.”- Carberry Elementary teacher***



## Outreach Lessons

In addition to on-site field trips, WaterShed staff presented lessons in 55 classrooms for 2,966 students. School presentations to middle school students are highly in-demand because it is difficult for teachers to pull students from other classes to take a field trip. 543 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at 12 schools were taught Snow Science, which is a partner program with Bogus Basin SnowSchool. The WaterShed prepares the students with information prior to their experience on the mountain.



## Programs and Events

The WaterShed plans and offers numerous events throughout the year for children and adults. Popular programs such as summer WaterShed Wednesdays, Tour Tuesdays, Homeschool Days and Toddler Story Time draw families from across the Treasure Valley. The total number of people reached through on-site events was 6,181.

WaterShed staff attend events held in off-site locations around the community to promote the center's mission through tabletop activities and conversations. In 2025 we reached 7,799 people through community events.

# ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

## NaviLens Technology at The WaterShed

A major advancement in effective communication occurred in 2025 with the installation of 16 NaviLens codes throughout The WaterShed exhibit hall. This innovative system uses high-contrast, long-distance specialized QR codes that provide:

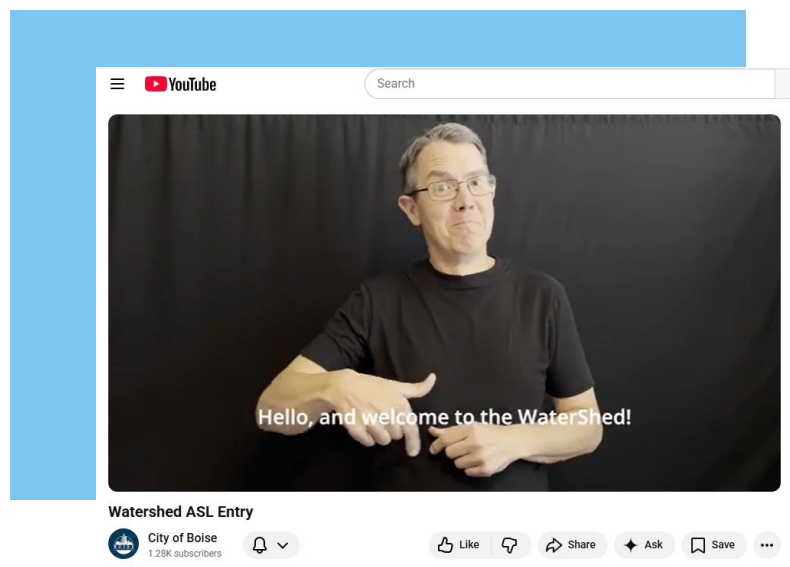
- Real-time spoken and text navigation and interpretive content
- ASL video interpretation
- Multiple language translations
- Enhanced independence for blind and low-vision visitors

The successful rollout reflects a strong collaboration with the City's accessibility coordinator, the blind and low-vision community, and the Cross Disability Task Force. Boise is now the first museum in the United States to implement NaviLens for public use—marking a milestone in accessible design and effective communication.

## ASL Videos

Three ASL videos were created in partnership with an educator from the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind. Visitors may access the videos from our web site and also via QR codes in the exhibit hall.

Additional accessibility tools implemented this year include: Sensory backpacks, tactile wayfinding signage and an accessibility [web page](#) on the WaterShed web site.





# PARTNERSHIPS

The WaterShed maintains active partnerships with the following organizations:

NASA Earth-to-Sky network, Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) Seeding Action, Project WET, Project Learning Tree, Idaho Environmental Education Association (IdEEA), Boise Museum Association, Boise School District, BSU, University of Idaho, Ada Soil & Water Conservation District, Veolia, Carollo, and SustainingUS.

In an effort to expand our climate network and to grow awareness of The WaterShed as a climate convener, the education center hosted the following groups in 2025:

- Idaho Rural Water Users Association (IRWA) conference tours
- American Water Works Association (AWWA) conference tours
- U of I Waste to Worth Conference
- City Club of Boise
- Climate Club of Boise
- Boise River Enhancement Network
- HP
- Key Bank
- Boise School District Green Teams
- Cross-disability Taskforce
- City of Nampa
- Sustainability Summit
- Idaho Master Naturalists
- Legislative Water College
- Idaho Clinicians for Climate and Health
- Latino Conservation Week Kick-off
- GEAS Audubon Society
- Idaho Rivers United
- Idaho Conservation League
- The Confluence Project workshop
- NASA Earth-to-Sky workshop
- Boise Community Climate Committee





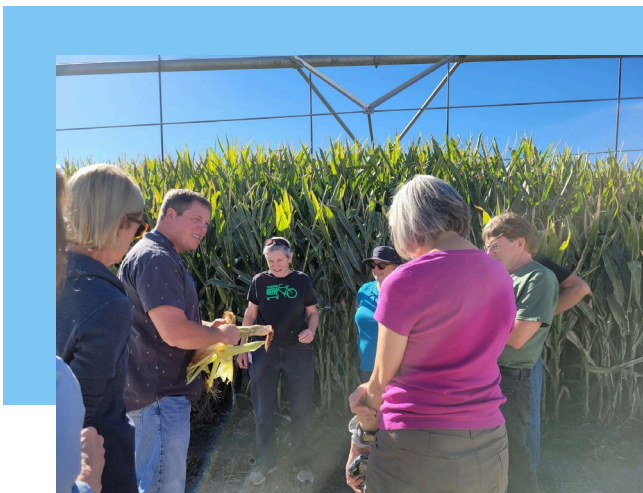
# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## Volunteers

WaterShed volunteers play an essential role in welcoming visitors, supporting education programs and events, and maintaining the river campus gardens. More than 25 volunteers logged 193 hours toward education programs and events. A core group of volunteers dedicated 63 hours weeding and maintaining the grounds. Volunteers enjoyed a special sneak peek of the new Exhibit Hall before it opened in March and completed training to help guide students through the space. Several volunteers stepped into leadership roles by learning to lead full Exhibit Hall tours, and one dedicated volunteer led weekend Water Renewal tours. We're grateful for their enthusiasm, commitment to our mission and continued support.

## Master Naturalists

This year we started the Master Naturalist Roundtable program for the City of Trees chapter of Master Naturalists. Throughout the year we held different learning opportunities to complement what they learn during the Master Naturalist program. Each event highlighted how the City of Boise is working to take climate action to create a City for Everyone. From a geothermal tour to learning about the Erma Hyman House and heat inequity, Master Naturalists had the chance to learn and discuss the climate impacts in our city.



## NASA Earth-to-Sky Workshop

The WaterShed is a proud supporter of NASA's Earth to Sky partnership and Earth to Sky's Team Idaho. From October 22-24, Team Idaho hosted its 4<sup>th</sup> annual workshop in Boise. Twenty-three formal and informal educators in the Treasure Valley were exposed to climate action on a local level and given the opportunity to develop place-based lesson plans that inspire climate action. These lesson plans will be free for teachers around the country.

Workshop participants reported learning new knowledge related to climate change (4.8/5), found their participation personally and professionally enriching (4.7/5), and learned new ways to exchange climate science with various audiences (4.7/5). When asked to describe a situation where they could use knowledge acquired through Earth to Sky Team Idaho, they said:

*“Creating a sustainability club at my school. Helping students identify the impact they have in the community and environment.”*

*“Helping students to create an action plan for a climate problem of their choosing.”*

*“I am going to talk to my science team, the science district leads, and my admin about changes we can make at our school that are student-led to make a difference”*



## Youth Climate Action Council

Founded in 2020, the Youth Climate Action Council (YCAC) is in its 5<sup>th</sup> year. This program has directly involved over 60 young Boiseans in climate action and leadership in the City of Boise. YCAC members have served over 2,750 volunteer hours towards Boise's climate goals.



In 2025, 12 YCAC members helped distribute over 200 pounds of textiles that would have otherwise gone to waste to people at the Treefort music festival and hosted the annual Youth Climate Action Summit that over 200 local, high school aged students attended.





## WaterShed Action Team

The Watershed Action Team is The WaterShed's paid internship program for youth between 15 and 17 years old. This year, the Watershed Action Team consisted of 14 youth who served over 800 hours in the summer. They planned and facilitated activities for the WaterShed Wednesday drop-in programs for families and assisted with summer on-site lessons for thousands of visitors over the summer. The average WaterShed Wednesday attendance was 204 people per week.





## Environmental Field Experience

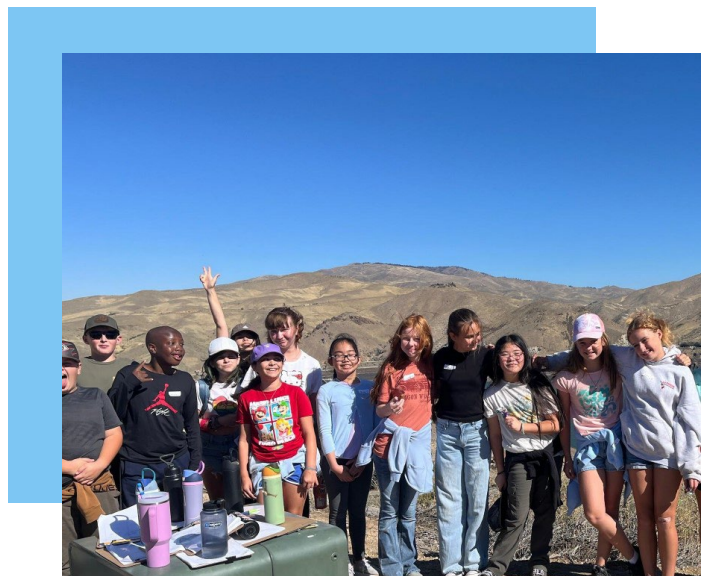
The purpose of the Boise School District's environmental field experience is to offer a place-based environmental education program with local partners that is rooted in science standards and improves 6<sup>th</sup> grade students' connectedness to nature and sustainability mindsets.

The WaterShed partners with Bogus Basin Snowschool staff, MK Nature Center, the University of Idaho Extension water educator and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality on the watershed strand. Together, we offered 7 weeks of field experiences for 472 students. Students explored human impacts related to water in three ecosystems: alpine, sagebrush-steppe and riparian environments.

Boise School District assessed students' connectedness to nature and environmental optimism through student impact surveys post- field experience. 632 responses were analyzed from the 1,732 students who participated. Survey results included:

- 75% of students said yes to “being outside makes them more interested in what they are learning.”
- Students showed high levels of agreement to the statement “Our choices can help the environment.”
- Other responses indicated students are developing sustainability mindsets characterized by appreciation and wonder, hopefulness, peer leadership tendencies and personal/collective agency.

*“I’ve never done this hike before and I want to take my family back here” - 6<sup>th</sup> grader, Whittier Elementary*



# IN THE NEWS

[Boise's WaterShed facility set to reopen](#)

KTVB 3/13/25

[Boise's new hands-on climate education center allows kids to see how they can help the planet](#)

Idaho Statesman 3/23/25

[It brings it to life: NaviLens technology Improves accessibility at The WaterShed](#)

Idaho News 6 7/17/25

[Idaho teachers participate in NASA climate workshop](#)

Idaho Press 10/25/25

[5<sup>th</sup> annual Idaho Latino Conservation Week organizes outdoor recreation activities and education events](#)

Idaho Press 09/11/25

