



OCCIDENTAL ARTS & ECOLOGY CENTER

2025 Update





Greetings from OAEC

We began this year riding high on the outpouring of love from you, our beloved community, as we celebrated our 30th Anniversary. Your ongoing friendship and support inspired our work and successes in 2025!

Movement Building Retreats

This year, we welcomed dozens of new and returning environmental and social movement organizations and networks from all over the country to OAEC for their strategic planning, training, and organizational retreats. In fact, 2025 was our busiest season on record, with 36 retreats (with nearly 50% as returnees) and the highest number of retreat days on the calendar. With more organizations working fully remotely, their OAEC retreat may be the only time that they gather in person each year. Many groups tell us that they consider OAEC their “movement building home,” returning again and again to experience the land, garden, and menus throughout the seasons and from year to year.

As the political climate becomes increasingly hostile to groups organizing for social change, OAEC remains committed to providing a place of refuge and support. Many groups are generously funded by foundations that recognize the importance of convening in person to meet this moment with imagination and joy. For those whose public funding has been cut off or who don't otherwise have the resources to come to OAEC, our Movement Building Retreat Fund enables us to offer a reduced rate to grassroots activist groups.

“Being situated within the nature of OAEC was an amazing experience and we are so grateful to have shared space with the land and your staff. Understanding the ecology and our surroundings added to our retreat and our thinking in small and big ways.”

-2025 Retreat Participant



On-site Resiliency

OAEC Campus Fire Prevention

With support from CAL FIRE's Safer West County Defensible Space Initiatives, we're increasing the fire-resiliency of our campus 'core area' through home hardening and defensible space projects. We're creating ember-resistant zones around 15 buildings by removing combustibles, improving materials, and adding fire-safe hardscaping. This work provides a living demonstration of fire adaptation to show our thousands of yearly visitors that these practices can make our facilities both fire safe and beautiful!



New Solar Panel and Microgrid

After many years of planning and considering the 'full cost accounting' of an energy project of this scale, we installed a solar and battery microgrid, including 270 solar panels and a large battery bank. The system will save money over time, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide reliable electricity for our retreat center even during grid outages. Though no technology is without environmental and social impact, generating our own power is a step toward long-term energy resilience.

Gardens, Orchards, and Food

Our gardens, orchards, and kitchen continue to produce literally tons of food, medicine, and flowers while providing beautiful outdoor meeting spaces and classrooms for our retreat guests, students, and residents. The Resilient Community Design Program expanded its offerings to include a course in Food Forest Design that showcased our holistically integrated food system. The perennial borders that bring beneficial insects and beauty to the garden underwent a major renovation last year in honor of OAEC's 30th Anniversary. Join us in the garden for volunteer day every Wednesday!



Nursery Reopening in 2026

The OAEC Nursery took the 2025 season off to make structural improvements and reimagine our vision for the program moving forward. We're excited to announce that we are reopening in spring 2026! We will continue to honor the 50-year tradition of the Mother Garden, with a renewed emphasis on uplifting ecologically and culturally important plants, and on growing perennial food, medicinal, and native varieties. Subscribe to the Nursery newsletter and follow us on Instagram for more updates!

Process-Based Restoration

from Ridgeline to Reef

Process-Based Restoration (PBR) is a holistic approach to restoring degraded watersheds that considers the biological needs and hydrological functions of the entire watershed. Our approach promotes the integration of often siloed techniques, practitioners, and agencies toward a whole-systems, whole-watershed approach to land management. This year, the WATER Institute hired two additional full-time staff to support a huge expansion in the two arms of our PBR policy, education, and community organizing work: **Fuels to Flows** in the uplands and **Beaver Coexistence** downstream.

Fuels to Flows Campaign



Our video on gully stuffing, a PBR technique that uses slash from fuel load reduction to heal eroded gullies, went viral with over 63K views!

Even our partners in France have been promoting it. Check out our new web pages with videos, how-to guides, case studies, and more.

The term “Fuels to Flows,” coined by our WATER Institute, calls for the reintegration of fire and “fuel” load management with the “flows” of the carbon, water, and life cycles. With millions of dollars being allocated for fire fuel load reduction in CA, it is crucial that watershed literacy inform these vegetation management decisions, or risk causing more harm than good. This year, the WATER Institute has been tirelessly sharing this information, participating in talks, trainings, and webinars throughout the state, and working toward ‘cutting the green tape’ to help low-risk, high-reward PBR techniques move forward with fewer permitting barriers.

On a local level, we continue to build the capacity and literacy of our regional agency and conservation NGO partners in Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino Counties through a variety of collaborations. Our ongoing workforce development trainings with Sonoma County Ag + Open Space, Sonoma County Regional Parks, and North Bay Jobs with Justice have been hugely successful. We have hosted a number of tours for agency professionals here at our Wildlands demonstration site and field campus, where many PBR installations can be seen in action. The Bohemian Collaborative, a group of OAEC’s Dutch Bill Creek watershed neighbors, meets regularly to collectively pursue funding opportunities and determine fire and water resiliency projects we can tackle together, including our recent home hardening efforts.

Beaver Coexistence Program

The OAEC [WATER Institute's California Beaver Coexistence Training and Support Program](#), in partnership with the [Beaver Institute](#), and the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Nature Based Solutions: Wetlands and Mountain Meadows Grant Program](#), is off to a wildly successful start!

We are proud to announce the launch of the [California Beaver Help Desk](#), which offers free technical assistance to land managers navigating human-beaver conflict, cost-share applications of up to 50% for project installation expenses, and tuition waivers for Californians who are ready to become Certified Beaver Coexistence Professionals through the [Beaver Institute's BeaverCorps Professional Training Program](#).

This fall, we held our first [Beaver Coexistence Field Training and Tour](#). Our team taught hands-on skills to California's next cohort of coexistence practitioners, who then installed four deterrent devices in the Central Valley, a region with frequent human-beaver conflict. We later led a public tour of the project for 41 land managers to demonstrate the effectiveness of beaver coexistence techniques.

CalPBR joins OAEC as a Fiscally Sponsored Project

In 2022, OAEC co-founded the [California Process-Based Restoration Network \(CalPBR\)](#), a resource hub for restoration practitioners and professionals. Now, CalPBR is going stronger than ever with the 4th annual sold-out [Build Like a Beaver](#) training, shown below. This year, [CalPBR Network officially became a Fiscally Sponsored Project of OAEC](#).



photo by Brock Dolman

Fiscally Sponsored Project News

Fiscal Sponsorship as a Movement Building Strategy

For 25 years, OAEC has provided fiscal sponsorship to emerging social change and environmental projects. OAEC provides its fiscally sponsored projects with accounting, HR, tax, and insurance services, as well as assistance with strategy, governance, and fundraising. By sharing infrastructure and expertise, OAEC achieves a “social change multiplier effect” - supporting and building the capacity of community leaders who are not ready or able to start their own non-profits. Our eight current fiscally sponsored projects are diverse in their activities and geography, and they are all inspiring, effective agents for change that are deeply connected to OAEC’s vision for the future.

Confronting the Oil Industry on the Global Stage

In March of 2022, environmental organizations and frontline communities from all over the world fought hard to win a United Nations Environment Assembly resolution to create an international, legally binding agreement to reduce plastic pollution. Since then, the movement has been keeping up the pressure to ensure it addresses the full life cycle of plastic from extraction to disposal, including reduction targets. Two projects fiscally sponsored at OAEC, Fenceline Watch and PACAN (Port Arthur Community Action Network), have been active participants in these global meetings of the International Negotiating Committee, bringing attention to the human rights violations caused by the petrochemical industry in their communities.

Below, John Beard, Jr, the founder of PACAN, gives powerful testimony at the 6th meeting of the UN Environmental Assembly International Negotiating Committee in August of this year.



photo by UN web TV

TERA Becomes an Independent 501(c)(3)

In the five years that the Tribal EcoRestoration Alliance (TERA) was a fiscally sponsored project of OAEC, they achieved extraordinary growth and success in their work to revitalize ecology, economy, and culture through Indigenous-led land stewardship. With OAEC's full support, TERA has now become its own 501(c)(3) organization, with a board of directors made up of representatives of their founding Tribes. They recently purchased a land center in their home territory in Lake County, California. TERA is an exemplary model of Tribal communities leading restoration projects and bringing an ecocultural approach to fuels reduction and wildfire resilience.



Alliance for Land-Based Mutual Aid (ALMA)

The Alliance for Land-Based Mutual Aid (ALMA) is a bioregional coalition formed to support the expanding network of land-access projects across the Bay Area. The seven founding community organizations - PODER, Black Ag Tech, Movement Generation, The Cultural Conservancy, North Bay Jobs with Justice, OAEC, and Shelterwood Collective - tend over 1,000 acres of land. ALMA aims to strengthen and multiply land-based initiatives and build capacity for lasting social, environmental, and organizational well-being. Our alliance is grounded in cultural wisdom, ecological resilience, social justice, self-governance, and mutual aid, driving transformative change through these core principles.



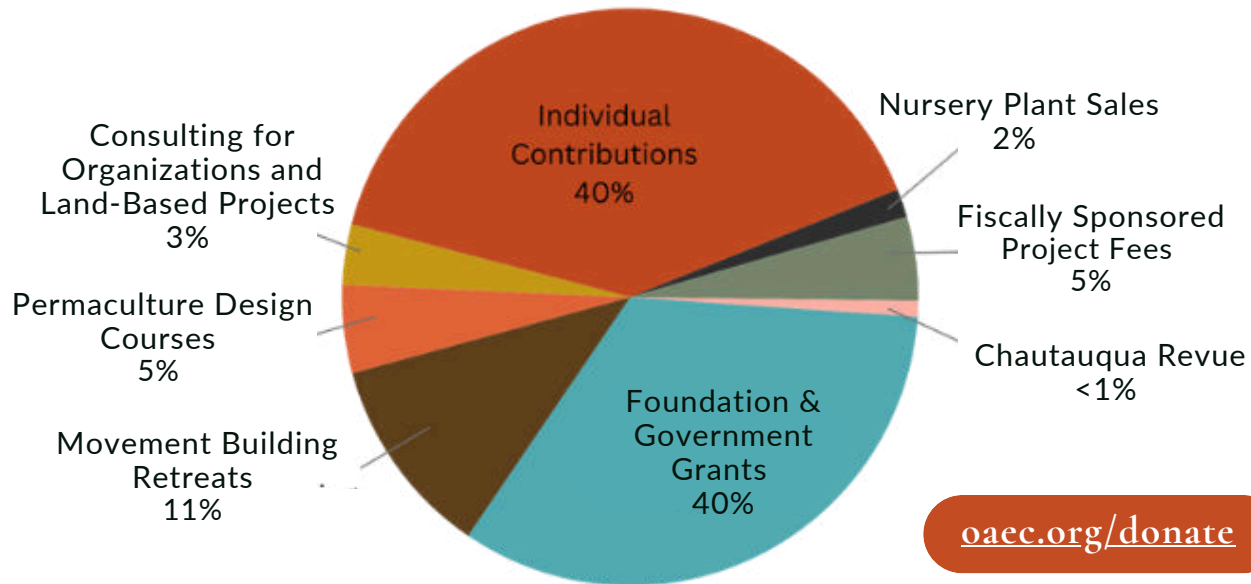
photo by Dani Hensel Parra

After two years of collective dreaming with our ALMA co-founders, we are excited to announce that ALMA is in the process of joining OAEC as an official fiscally sponsored project! ALMA's work in the coming year will focus on alliance building, offering mutual aid trainings, and creating a resource hub for organizations to both offer and access mutual aid in the areas of community governance, land acquisition/legal, ecological land-tending skills, economy/finance, cultural healing work, and more.

Thank you, donors, volunteers, and friends, for your generous support!



OAEC focuses on diverse revenue sources for long-term financial stability.



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