



# NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

Oregon/Washington  
2022: Annual Manager's Report

## Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area





# Accomplishments

Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area (Yaquina Head) had many accomplishments during fiscal year (FY) 2022, including the continuation of a very successful adaptation of the education program to the virtual environment. In November, Lindsay Brandt, a Yaquina Head education technician, received a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Inspirational Interpretation and Resource Education award for her work on the adapted education program. The education program worked with educators to support flexible learning activities, particularly for teachers and school groups whose field trips were cancelled due to the pandemic. The education curriculum links to local and national standards and promotes scientific thinking and exploration, with students participating in hands-on activities throughout the lesson. In FY 2022, the BLM offered 30 ranger-led virtual programs with 409 total participants. On site, rangers provided program to 52 groups with 734 total participants. Teachers also led 56 groups with 1,287 total participants.

In 2022, work was also completed on the lighthouse's historic work room, including the reconstruction of the original fireplace, repair of the mortar on the interior walls, and interior painting.



**Yaquina Head interpretive specialists provide a virtual program**

# Challenges

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As a small and heavily visited recreation destination, Yaquina Head experiences episodes of traffic congestion at the entrance station, popular overlooks, and parking areas. During the summer of 2022, Yaquina Head, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration Western Federal Lands Highway Division (FHWA-WFL), completed a study to evaluate the site’s transportation system. The Yaquina Head Traffic Study—which is a collaboration between the FHWA-WFL, the BLM, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and the City of Newport—identified issues and potential solutions to address site needs, including operations at the entrance station, overall site circulation, multimodal accommodations with safety enhancements, parking management, electric vehicle charging, and congestion mitigation. When identifying potential improvements, the study considered public and stakeholder input, environmental constraints, constructability challenges, and financial feasibility. In October of 2022, the City of Newport formally adopted the traffic study and plan. The BLM also successfully supported the City of Newport in securing a six-million-dollar Federal Land Access Program grant in 2022.

Another reoccurring challenge is maintaining staffing levels to support the education program and visitor services, including facility maintenance. Housing costs on the Oregon coast are very high, with many prior housing options having been converted into short-term rentals. This poses challenges for new seasonal staff and results in a high turnover rate for seasonal positions.



**A line of vehicles waiting at the Yaquina Head entrance station**

# Visitors

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From exploring tidepools teeming with life to seeing Oregon's tallest lighthouse, there is something for every visitor at Yaquina Head. The BLM counted 453,293 visitors to Yaquina Head in FY 2022. This is similar to FY 2021 visitation levels.

Yaquina Head provides a variety of scenic coastal and wildlife viewpoints from which visitors may see whales, seals, and seabirds. As part of COVID-19 mitigation efforts, Yaquina Head staff provided the public with self-guided information on ecology, natural systems, and cultural history. The self-guided information targeted various age groups, needs, and interests. In FY 2022, Yaquina Head continued the work it piloted in 2021 with Agents of Discovery, an educational mobile game application that lets BLM-administered sites create interactive, location-based challenges to engage visitors. Through Agents of Discovery, Yaquina Head offers visitors multiple interactive, self-guided virtual tours through their cellphones.



**Visitors explore the Cobble Beach tidepools**

# Partnerships

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Many of Yaquina Head's accomplishments are the result of partnerships, which include, but are not limited to:

- Oregon State University leads tidepool species monitoring, seabird monitoring, and climate change research at Yaquina Head.
- The Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses has a memorandum of understanding with the BLM allowing it to operate the bookstore in the interpretive center. In 2022, Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses also provided two high school age rangers to assist visitors at the tidepools.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has jurisdiction over the islands and rocks off the headland, which are part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Congress also designated these islands as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. A 2020 memorandum of understanding with the USFWS strengthens the partnership within Interior Region 9 between Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area and the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. This partnership will improve service to the public and focuses on shared stewardship goals, educating visitors about coastal resources, and addressing increasing recreation demands in the region.
- The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife administers the Yaquina Head Marine Garden, including Cobble Beach and the Quarry Cove Intertidal Area. The BLM monitors and helps manage use of these areas through a memorandum of understanding.



**An early blue violet (*Viola adunca*) at Yaquina Head**

# Science

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Yaquina Head is a hub for scientific research on the Oregon coast. Each year, the BLM issues science permits to universities and agencies for research on wildlife biology, as well as oceanic and atmospheric data collection. In 2022, the BLM issued eight science permits. The BLM also continued with the previously awarded Management Studies Support Program grant to Oregon State University. This grant continues funding for a long-term seabird monitoring project, which also includes a community science initiative that enriches the visitor experience.

Seabirds are a cornerstone asset for Yaquina Head and are a primary feature of educational and recreational opportunities at this site. Yaquina Head and adjacent rocks provide habitat for one of the largest seabird colonies on the western coast of the contiguous United States. The region's coastal waters support extensive commercial and recreational fisheries and ecotourism, including birdwatching. During the summer months, over 80,000 seabirds nest on or adjacent to Yaquina Head and use the coastal waters for foraging. Scientists have documented the importance of seabirds, including common murre, as indicators of ecosystem health, changing ocean conditions, and climate oscillations. Oregon State University's research contributes to the BLM's ability to effectively manage and conserve seabirds so that future generations may enjoy this spectacular viewing experience.



**An aerial photograph of thousands of common murre nesting on Colony Rock**

# Climate Impacts

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Climate change amplifies threats to the natural landscape. Rising temperatures and prolonged droughts in the Pacific Northwest are impacting the natural landscape, including through more intense storms and extreme weather.

Yaquina Head partners with Oregon State University and the USFWS on the collection of data used to assess ecosystem response to variation in ocean climate and sea levels along the Oregon coast and Northern California Current System. This collaborative effort allows for a better understanding of how climate change impacts the natural landscape and helps inform conservation efforts.



**Staff conduct sea star surveys in the tidepools below Yaquina Head**



# Climate Resiliency

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The history of past land use plays an important role in future management at Yaquina Head. A large portion of the site was in the private domain until acquired by the BLM in the 1980s. While in private ownership, the headland was grazed and seeded with livestock forage. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, rock quarrying resulted in the removal of a large portion of one of the two notable hills originally comprising Yaquina Head. Since designation as an Outstanding Natural Area in 1980, the site has recovered much of its natural and wild character primarily through passive restoration efforts.

In FY 2022, crews and volunteers continued to advance and maintain open meadows and revegetate areas with native grasses and forbs to support pollinator species. Much of the physical labor was provided by volunteers from Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses and other partners. This effort was part of the 6,448 hours of work conducted by volunteers at Yaquina Head in FY 2022. Over 16,000 native pollinator plants have been added to the landscape to assist with Oregon spotted butterfly habitat.



**Work continues to revegetate Yaquina Head with native grasses**

# Social and Environmental Justice

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Yaquina Head continues to offer the public accessible and inclusive interpretive programs. During FY 2022, the BLM offered many virtual or socially distanced interpretive programs. The interpretive staff also moved the annual Victorian holiday celebration online and developed an extensive library of interpretive videos.

In 2022, Yaquina Head continued its partnership with Environment for the Americas, a non-profit organization that places diverse students in conservation internships with federal agencies. Andrea Robles, the 2022 Environment for the America's intern, was a valuable member of Yaquina Head's education and interpretation team. In the spring, she co-led virtual and in-person environmental education programs. The education team presented a total of 82 programs and reached 1,143 students overall. For World Migratory Bird Day, Andrea developed an interpretive resource table on light pollution and how it affects migratory birds. In addition, she designed a Junior Birder booklet on the birds of Yaquina Head.

During the summer, Andrea's duties shifted from education programs to interpretive programs for the public and family groups. She developed and presented a short interpretive program on the status of sea otters on the Oregon Coast and their importance to the ecosystem. In addition, she provided many hours of informal interpretation to visitors in the tidepools and throughout the site.

Lastly, Andrea assisted the Oregon State University Seabird Oceanography Lab with seabird monitoring. For 8 hours each week during the seabird breeding season, Andrea used a spotting scope to monitor cormorants and their nesting sites. This work provided data that helped determine the breeding success rate for the season.



**Andrea Robles, the 2022 Environment for the America's intern, talks with kids on Cobble Beach**

# Events

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The BLM Artist-in-Residence Program offers opportunities for painters, photographers, potters, sculptors, and other artists to promote deeper understanding of, and dialogue about, the significance of natural, cultural, and historic resources on public lands managed by the BLM, including those in the National Landscape Conservation System. In FY 2022, Yaquina Head, along with partners Friends of Yaquina Head Lighthouses and Oregon Coast Council for the Arts, welcomed artist Emy Syrop. Emy spent from mid-May through early June creating and sharing her art at Yaquina Head. The Artist in Residence Program will return to Yaquina Head in FY 2023.



**Artist-in-Residence Emy Syrop works on a painting of Yaquina Head**

## Words from the staff

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This year continued to confirm the value of recreation and the innate need of people to access areas of naturalness. While in-person programming is back, Yaquina Head is also continuing to provide the innovative virtual programming it began during the pandemic. These programs allow the BLM to share this special place with a wider and more diverse audience.

Yaquina Head is a place where the public can participate in history and the wild nature of the Pacific Coast. Our priority work is maintaining access to the area's extraordinary visitor opportunities and protecting the unique scenic, scientific, educational, and recreational values in and around Yaquina Head.

The photo below depicts the ongoing restoration project on the Yaquina Head Lighthouse. In 2022, work was completed on the historic work room, including the reconstruction of the original fireplace, repair of the mortar on the interior walls, and interior painting.



**BLM staff member working on the restoration of the historic work room**



# NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

## Yaquina Head

### Outstanding National Area

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<https://www.flickr.com/photos/blmoregon/albums/72157625392020039/>

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