



2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



*"In this time of historic uncertainty,
OPB is a beacon in the night."*

—Matthew, Tigard

***OPB: giving voice to the community, connecting
Oregon and its neighbors, illuminating a wider world.***



OPB serves our community with public service journalism that connects us to the rich and important stories of our region—stories that would not be told elsewhere. We provide in-depth, trusted news and award-winning stories that can be accessed anywhere, at any time on OPB TV, OPB Radio, opb.org and on digital and social media.

OPB places special emphasis on creating content that features the people, places and issues of importance to those in the Northwest. Our newsroom expands across the region, from southern Washington to southern Oregon, to deliver in-depth reporting in news, arts and culture; and science and environment.

OPB serves diverse communities of the Northwest with fact-based, in-depth news and information about politics, the environment, science, arts, history, and cultures; business, education and more. We seek out a variety of voices in our communities and lift up authentic stories of the people, places, events and issues of the region, providing context and a deeper understanding.



2020 was a year like no other. It was historic for many reasons—a global pandemic, an economic recession, calls for racial justice, and a deeply divided public facing an important election.

During these complex and challenging events, having reliable access to trusted journalism is critical. In 2020, we focused our storytelling and reporting in three major areas: news; science and the environment; and arts and culture.

News

Comprised of journalists across Oregon and southern Washington, OPB delivers local and regional news coverage daily, along with deep investigative reporting. Some of our major news series and initiatives in 2020 include:

- Continuing coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it has deeply affected communities around the Northwest (see page 5 for details).
- In-depth reporting and analysis about the 2020 election, including regional ballot measures and candidates, a local perspective on national races, and results on all races.
- Breaking, on-the-ground reports on the Portland protests for racial justice. In July, [OPB's breaking news reporting revealed](#) that federal law enforcement officers, in camouflage and without identification, were arresting Portland protesters off the street using unmarked vehicles. The story prompted a national conversation with coverage from The Washington Post, PBS NewsHour, CNN, BBC, MSNBC and other media.
- Round-the-clock reporting on the region's historic and devastating wildfire season.

Amid all of these challenging events, OPB continued to deliver our daily email newsletter, "First Look," giving readers convenient access to the most important news and culture stories right in their inbox. The weekly "OPB Politics Now" podcast also continued to deliver to its online and mobile subscribers, taking a deep dive into the region's essential election and political topics: Every Friday, OPB's reporters and special guests offer in-depth analysis, discussion and insight into candidates, events and issues.

In 2020, OPB continued playing a central role in the regional news ecosystem with our Northwest News Partnership, which brings together news coverage from more than 50 news organizations across Oregon and Washington. We also continued work on several national content partnerships, including participation in the ProPublica Local Reporting Network for local and regional investigative journalism; and participation in "[Move to Include](#)," a public media initiative aimed at promoting inclusion for people with intellectual and physical disabilities.

"Think Out Loud®," an engaging OPB original daily radio program and podcast, has established itself as the centerpiece of our region's coverage of politics and civic and cultural life. The show explores issues, ideas, culture and news and encourages people with different perspectives to discuss various topics with one another.

In 2020, "Think Out Loud":

- Discussed COVID-19 and its ongoing toll on Oregon and Washington residents—from the latest restrictions on businesses and social gatherings, to the pandemic's effects on the local economy, schools, hard-hit rural communities, courts and jails, long-term care facilities, homeless shelters, mental health and the ways we now grieve.
- Hosted debates with major 2020 election candidates from Oregon's biggest local and statewide races, including candidates for Portland Mayor, Oregon Secretary of State, and Portland City Council; and discussions on key ballot measures and what the outcomes of those races will mean for residents in Oregon and southwest Washington.
- Featured conversations related to the Black Lives Matter movement across Oregon, including a look at [why Portland's relationship with the police is so complicated](#).

Science & Environment

OPB's Science & Environment team unites all of OPB's collective resources—digital, Radio and TV—to deliver the most comprehensive and consequential science and environment stories unfolding in our own backyards.

In 2020, the Science & Environment team provided essential science reporting and analysis on COVID-19 to help keep audiences informed and safe; and important stories about the virus' toll on the Northwest environment, recreation and much more.

While the pandemic hit the science community with [funding uncertainties, data disruptions and field work impacts](#), OPB continued to offer regional coverage on topics like climate change, pollution and hazardous waste dumping; fish and wildlife restoration efforts; watershed cultural moments that included the return of ancestral lands to the Clatsop-Nehalem and Nez Perce tribes; and people of color who are pushing for [more visibility in conversations about the outdoors](#) in Oregon.

In early September, OPB provided critical and continuous updates to the public as rapid wildfires consumed more than a million acres of Oregon land, set new records for unsafe air quality, and, at one point, placed more than 500,000 Oregonians under some kind of evacuation order. It was during this historic wildfire season that audiences also turned to OPB for context and understanding about the history of Northwest forest management.

Last summer, OPB launched a [landmark series of investigative reports](#) in partnership with The Oregonian/OregonLive and the ProPublica Local Reporting Network that examines the ecological and economic impacts of Oregon's modern timber industry. Following this series, OPB released an "Oregon Field Guide" special on OPB TV in conjunction with our new seven-part podcast "Timber Wars," which looks at the 30-year fight for control of Northwest forests (see page 4 for details).

"Oregon Field Guide" is an award-winning OPB original television series delivering smart and informed coverage of environmental, geological, ecological and outdoor recreation topics, while providing audiences a window into the beauty of the Northwest.



Last year, “Field Guide” producers took viewers on memorable journeys across the region, including a bikepacking adventure from Portland to the Oregon Coast, a hunt for an unusual algae creature in Upper Klamath Lake, and a father-daughter journey into Oregon’s underground caves. As part of the national public media initiative “Move to Include,” they hit the slopes at Mount Bachelor with adaptive skiers and volunteers working together to make skiing accessible to people with disabilities. And they showed viewers the pandemic’s toll on the outdoors, following local climbers who celebrated state park reopenings and wildland firefighters who faced new challenges due to COVID-19.

In 2020, “Field Guide” also took viewers back in time: exploring the history of Bayocean, an Oregon resort town that fell into the sea; following life on Mount St. Helens 40 years after the volcano erupted; and examining the 1990s battle over Northwest timber.

Arts & Culture

OPB’s arts and culture reporting features the latest in visual arts, theater, music, literature, culture and more. In 2020, we chronicled the enormous impact of both the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for racial justice on our creative community. We followed stories from Oregon’s historic theaters and performing arts venues that were forced to shutter in March; as some venues looked for opportunities in preservation, others explored how to bring live performances to a virtual world. We shared stories of resilience from local restaurants and food carts, and reported on how Oregon’s changing food culture is confronting racism in the food industry.

During the year’s historic protests, communities across the country reckoned with increased scrutiny of and damage to monuments and other works of public art. Now, the Oregon arts community looks ahead to consider [the meaning, impact and future of its public art](#), including what works will be repaired, preserved, replaced or renamed in the years to come.

“Oregon Art Beat,” another of our award-winning original television series, profiles artists, musicians and artisans from around the region. Show producers and crew have traveled extensively to capture the eclectic mix of creative talent in the Northwest. The program features on-location reporting and thematic episodes.

Last year, “Art Beat” took viewers outdoors with landscape painter and Guggenheim Fellow Stephen Hayes, and with Portland-based painter and muralist Alex Chiu, who uses his art to lift up Portland’s communities of color. They went from the studio of portrait artist Jeremy Okai Davis whose work speaks to racism and healing, and into the joyful and welcoming dance work of vogue dancer and teacher Daniel Giron. In participation with the national public media initiative “Move to Include,” they followed the processes of John Furniss, who goes by “The Blind Woodsman” and creates intricate wood-turned vessels by touch.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the “Art Beat” team set out to learn how Oregon’s artists were coping with this sudden crisis—part of OPB’s [“Postcards From the Pandemic”](#) series of videos (see page 5 for details).

“Oregon Experience” is an OPB original television history series that explores Oregon’s rich past and helps all of us—from natives to newcomers—gain a better understanding of the historical, social and political fabric of our state. Co-produced with the Oregon Historical Society, the series draws upon the Society’s skilled researchers and extensive image archives.

Last year, “Oregon Experience” examined the complex and often shocking history of one of Oregon’s most notorious institutions—the Fairview Training Center. For nearly 100 years, Fairview was Oregon’s primary facility for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Released in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), our one-hour documentary [“In the Shadow of Fairview”](#) was produced in partnership with the “Move to Include” initiative. In December, OPB hosted a live virtual screening of the program followed by a community discussion for a public audience of 300 people from across the region.

In 2020, at [opbmusic.org](#), listeners could stream audio from our 24/7 music channel, join conversations, find interviews, hear new music, read reviews of concerts and albums, and watch video premieres and performances of hundreds of studio and soundcheck sessions.

Last year’s restrictions on large gatherings created a unique obstacle for live performances. To help bring new music to audiences safely, opbmusic partnered with artists and organizations to present at-home sessions in the community. Among its major partnerships, opbmusic joined the Oregon Symphony to host videos for Essential Sounds—an online video series of musical performances inspired by the stories of essential workers. opbmusic also partnered with OPB Radio to produce a series of long-form audio stories highlighting music from across the region, including hip-hop artist Aminé, songwriter Thao Nguyen, trans country rock singer Charlotte McCaslin, and folk-rock troubadour M. Ward.

In addition, opbmusic continued its partnerships with community radio station KMUZ-FM, where listeners could hear opbmusic on terrestrial radio overnight; and nonprofit digital music video service VuHaus, where all of opbmusic’s recent sessions and opbmusic videos can be viewed at [livesessions.npr.org/happening/portland](#).

KMHD Jazz Radio showcases the best of the jazz spectrum. Operated by OPB and licensed to Mount Hood Community College, KMHD has been a staple of the Portland jazz scene for the last 37 years. KMHD champions jazz performances and education to ensure that this uniquely American art form continues to thrive in our region.

In 2020, KMHD interviewed local artists, and supported various partnerships and projects including the PDX Jazz and Soul’d Out music festivals, as well as virtual events such as the Cathedral Park and Montavilla jazz festivals. KMHD also worked with local musicians and entities during the global pandemic to share live streams, DJ sets and new recorded content.

Move to Include

In commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), OPB participated in a national public media collaboration "Move to Include." Funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and sponsored locally by Relay Resources, the initiative promoted inclusion for people with intellectual and physical disabilities, highlighting their unique and diverse experiences through the power of multimedia.

For this initiative, OPB offered original films, shows and stories on OPB TV and [online at opb.org](https://www.opb.org), where audiences can learn how current events such as COVID-19 are affecting people living with disabilities locally, as well as historical perspectives that illuminate the ways in which Oregon's past disability policies still affect our communities. Stories and resources from OPB are also available to teachers, families and students through the [PBS LearningMedia collection](https://www.pbs.org/learningmedia).



Election 2020

Throughout this past election cycle, OPB was there to cover candidates and issues at every level of the ballot, providing facts, context, and a forum for civil dialogue, and diverse perspectives. Our robust political team, along with our reporters across the region, informed audiences with in-depth coverage and analysis.

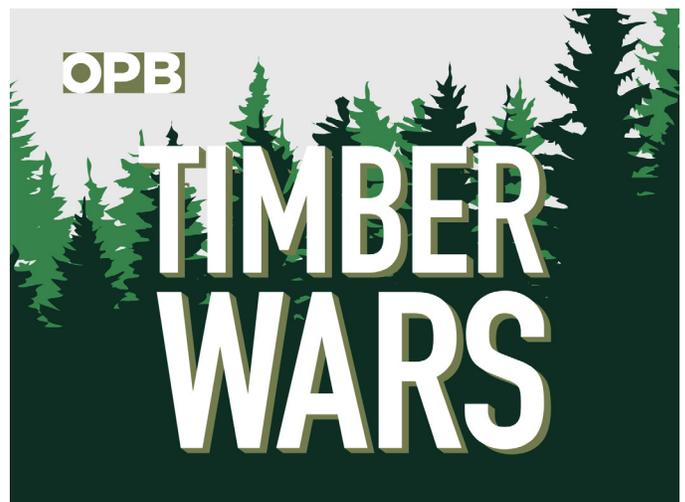
OPB offered a number of ways to stay informed, connected and engaged with election topics, including analysis from our OPB political team on our weekly podcast "OPB Politics Now," engaging candidate debates and conversations on "Think Out Loud", and important election updates delivered straight to readers' inboxes with our daily email newsletter "First Look." At [opb.org/election2020](https://www.opb.org/election2020) and on OPB Radio, audiences found a home for our comprehensive election reporting, including interviews, [explainer videos](#) and results on all races.



Timber Wars Podcast

In September, OPB launched "[Timber Wars](#)," a new podcast that takes a close look at the history, impact and consequences of the fight over Pacific Northwest forests that began a generation ago and continues today.

The seven-part podcast tells the story of how a small group of activists and scientists turned the fight over ancient trees and the rare northern spotted owl into one of the biggest environmental conflicts of the 20th century. In an engaging narrative, "Oregon Field Guide" producer Aaron Scott explores the many ways this fight over the forest reshaped not just the Northwest, but the nation as a whole. The battle transformed the very way we think about forests. It also divided the nation, turning environmental conflicts into culture wars that further entrenched the rural/urban divide. The podcast supports a landmark investigative series from OPB in partnership with ProPublica and The Oregonian/OregonLive about the Northwest timber industry today.





A trusted source of essential COVID-19 coverage for the region

In 2020, nearly every story we produced was touched by the COVID-19 pandemic in some way, as was the manner in which we reported them. This included our special coverage of political events, and our daily local reporting on science, the environment, arts, culture, education, business and more. Through it all, our commitment to providing fact-based, thoughtful journalism was never more vital. In 2020, OPB provided:

Answers to critical COVID-19 science and safety questions

The rapid spread of a novel virus has presented people the world over with an overwhelming amount of information, misinformation, and scientific and medical jargon. To help our audiences stay informed and up to date, OPB's dedicated Science & Environment reporters were there to provide the facts and break down the information in a clear, understandable way. Our audience turned to us to find essential [FAQs](#) and interviews, [explainer videos about the vaccine](#) and more; along with a growing [glossary](#) of words related to the crisis.

A one-stop source for Oregon's latest COVID-19 data

One key question was—and still is—how quickly the virus is spreading. In April, OPB began tracking daily updates, charting total and newly confirmed cases and deaths and mapping new virus cases across the state. On OPB Radio and online, audiences could find the latest announcements and information available; plus, new, convenient access to Oregon's daily reported case numbers, hospital capacity levels and reported vaccinations at opb.org.

Personal stories of lives reshaped by the pandemic

When COVID-19 restrictions arrived in Oregon, OPB began to produce short videos illustrating how the pandemic was reshaping life across the region. The result was "[Postcards From the Pandemic](#)," a series of text, audio and video stories told across OPB's digital and broadcast platforms. Our stories have highlighted emergency managers' efforts to keep firefighters safe during wildfire season, the challenges of feeding tribal elders, addiction recovery efforts interrupted, virtual religious services, agricultural workers whose lives were upended and many other stories of Northwest life today.



These are the faces of some of the dozens of Northwest residents who shared stories of life during COVID-19 with OPB this year.

Support for teachers, students and families

Last spring, OPB adjusted its television schedules to support K-12 students with grade-level and subject-based programs, providing thousands of children access to educational lessons while Oregon schools were closed. OPB's 24-hour Kids Channel continued to serve our youngest viewers—part of public media's mission to ensure all children—regardless of their access to resources—have continued, free educational materials at home.



In December, OPB's "[Class of 2025](#)" podcast returned for its second season, following the lives of students as they learned to navigate middle school during a global pandemic, distance learning and one of the worst economic meltdowns in recent history. The six-episode season is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, the NPR One app and at opb.org.



Our Commitment to Anti-Racism

Many of the issues OPB examines have at least two sides. We strive to present the facts so our listeners, readers, and viewers can stay better informed to make their own decisions. But we must take a clear stand on certain issues. We stand firm against racism.

Oregon—and our region—has deep roots in racism. As a public media organization serving all communities in the Northwest, we have a responsibility to examine our shared history in order to understand the issues and injustices that still exist today.

Doing this requires an organization that values diversity, equity and inclusion and has a culture that supports it. That is why OPB has taken several actions to date that align with these values, including:

- Partnering with the Center for Equity and Inclusion based in Portland, to implement diversity, equity and inclusion work across OPB and creating an internal equity team to steer it.
- Participating in the Public Media for All initiative, a diverse coalition of public media workers, led by people of color.
- Conducting an anonymous cultural assessment survey for OPB staff.
- Providing diversity, equity and inclusion training to all regular OPB staff.
- Eliminating unpaid internships, offering paid opportunities to existing interns, and creating two new paid fellowships.
- Commissioning a pay equity study by an outside organization.

“Not only during times like this crisis, but every day we depend on OPB to bring us current, well-researched and unbiased news and information. There is no better time to remind ourselves that a free press is essential in a democracy.”

– Linda, Bend

“More than ever, I am counting on OPB for factual, thorough information I can trust.”

– Sharon, Portland

“I have been a listener for 30 years and have enjoyed OPB radio and OPB television every day. My husband and I are both front line workers. OPB radio keeps me informed, OPB television keeps me sane.”

– Stacey, Troutdale

OPB by the Numbers

- OPB reaches an average of more than one million people per week in Oregon and southern Washington on OPB TV and OPB Radio combined.
- OPB.org averages four million page views per month, including 1.5 million average monthly users and an average of more than 1.4 million live audio streams per month.
- OPB is generously supported by more than 160,000 members who provide nearly two-thirds of our funding.
- OPB’s weekly e-newsletter “OPB Insider” connects its more than 61,000 active subscribers to all things related to OPB content and community, while our daily e-newsletter “OPB First Look” serves more than 20,000 subscribers with an average daily open rate of 50 percent.
- OPB has more than 173,000 OPB Facebook fans, 119,000 Twitter followers, 30,000 Instagram followers, and 36,000 YouTube subscribers.
- OPB transitioned to remote and virtual volunteer opportunities during the pandemic; last year, 240 volunteers donated more than 5,000 hours of service to OPB.