



Bioregional Financing Facilities

Reimagining Finance to Regenerate Our Planet

Case Study 9: Regenerate Cascadia



BioFi Project



Capital Systems



BUCKMINSTER
FULLER INSTITUTE

Regenerate Cascadia – Coordinated and Coherent Bioregional Organizing

By: Taya Seidler, Clare Attwell, Brandon Letsinger, and Sheri Herndon

About Regenerate Cascadia

Regenerate Cascadia is a capacity-building organization and a social movement and developing a vision and framework to administer a regeneration fund for Cascadia, a bioregion located along the upper Pacific Rim of North America stretching from Southeast Alaska to Northern California, and as far east as the Yellowstone Caldera. A central goal of Regenerate Cascadia is to grow capacity cohesively across the scales of landscapes, ecoregions, and bioregions – something that currently does not exist locally or globally – as part of a multi-generational strategy for the long-term health of the Cascadia bioregion. Regenerate Cascadia is addressing the complex challenges in funding connected landscape outcomes across a bioregion through a whole-systems approach that: prioritizes the central role of place-based stewardship; ensures decision-making is held by those at the local level; develops trust-based networks that hold the integrity of the work; and uses a nested scale structure to facilitate information flow, representation, and learning across the whole system.

Activating a bioregional movement

Regenerate Cascadia was formed by Brandon Letsinger and Clare Attwell in April 2023 during the first ever Salmon Nation Edge Prize, where their vision to activate a bioregional movement in Cascadia won the Edge Prize for Innovation in Systems and Governance. After months of planning with 100+ local community organizers on both sides of the Canada-US border, they partnered with the Design School for Regenerating Earth to co-facilitate a month-long Bioregional Activation Tour. They traveled to 14 communities around Cascadia during October 2023, hosting presentations that asked, “How do we regenerate the Cascadia bioregion?”. They met with more than 1000 individuals, including Indigenous knowledge keepers, regenerative leaders, groups, community artists, and elders across Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia through presentations, workshops, site visits, and strategy sessions. This was followed by an online summit that brought together 50+ presentations in a ‘Festival of What Works’, and concluded with an Open Space Unconference from November 3-12, 2023, where participants cocreated working groups for Regenerate Cascadia. The vision resonated strongly with many communities across the bioregion. Jay Bowen, an elder of the Skagit people who opened the Summit, articulated the following statement in the opening ceremony:

“

Gathered before us are the most important people in the world. It may be a small group right now, but in a few short years, there's going to be a long line of people waiting to get involved in this very important movement that is overseeing the welfare of our communities.

Beyond this, Regenerate Cascadia has succeeded in meeting the core challenge participatory events often struggle with – maintaining momentum and continuous engagement among participants. They have an active Telegram channel of 121 members sharing thousands of messages through 39 subchannels covering specific topics and guilds, organizational infrastructure discussions, local communities' individual channels, media and communication, inter alia. The community is thriving and members are actively engaging with each other. The Regenerate Cascadia community of 'regenerators' has since co-developed a digital platform to support the work; they continue to collaboratively take in feedback and refine this prototype as their ideas and needs evolve.

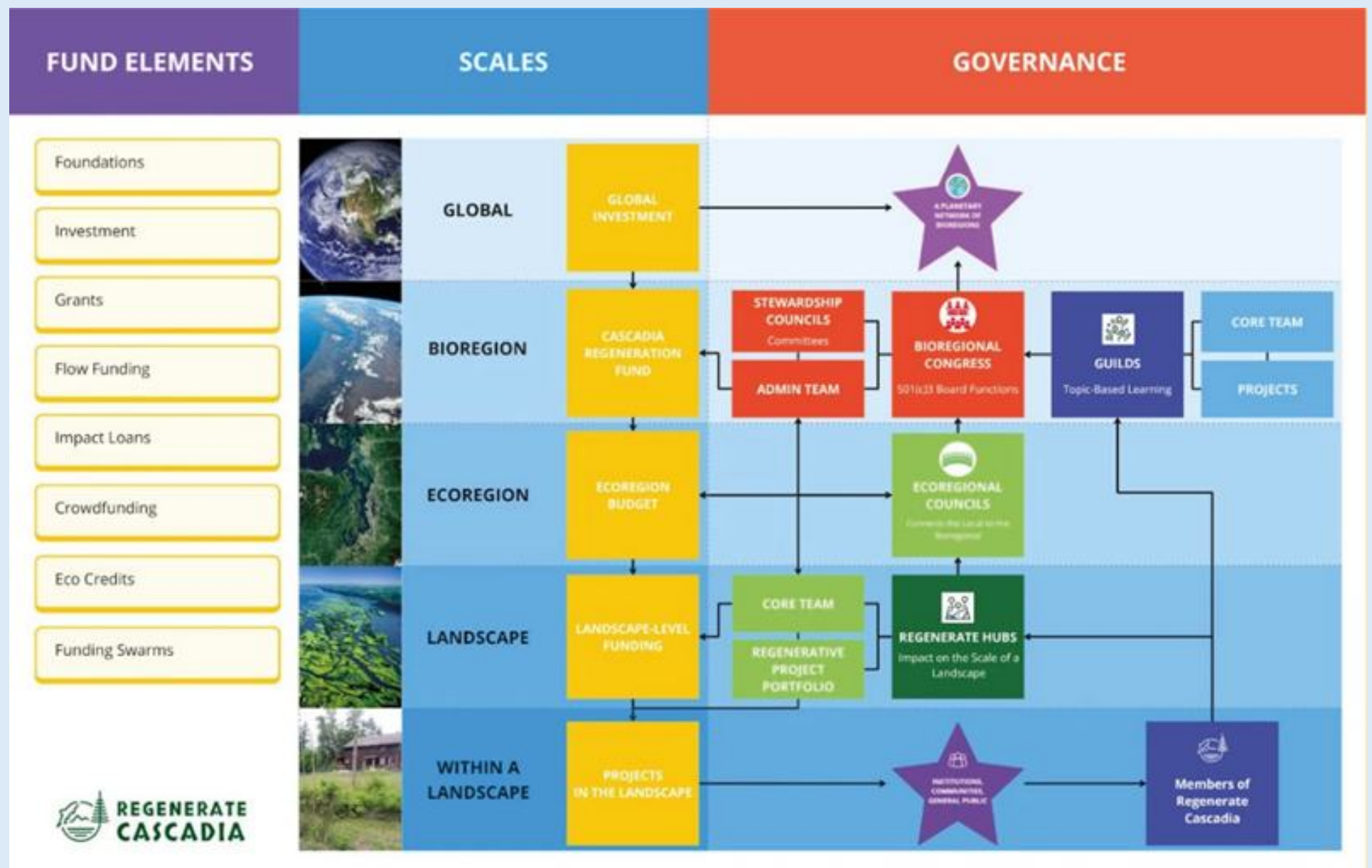
A digital landscape

The digital platform includes a structural framework (see Figure 11.) that prioritizes community-led work within a landscape, while thoughtfully aggregating place-based projects into larger coordination structures. A 'front door' website is an easy entry point for people to learn more, join as a member, donate to specific projects, and get more involved. Projects and communities each have a landing page that serve as a focal point for local news, resources, and events. These are curated by participating communities and are indexable by search engines. The digital platform provides an online space to connect within a landscape and across watersheds at the nested scales of ecoregions and the Cascadia bioregion. The platform includes a comprehensive 'back end' suite of tools and resources to support local project work, including (i) education and onboarding; (ii) an information commons and searchable directories; (iii) a regenerative movement map and relational database; and (iv) comprehensive data, measurement, evaluation and reporting capabilities. All Regenerate Cascadia programs are part of an integrated 501(c)3 nonprofit administrative backend to provide accounting, receive grants, raise funds, deliver timely financial reporting, and maintain legal compliance.

Ecological Institutions

Additionally, the use of decentralized protocols enables the creation of novel legal and economic actors, which would not be possible in a conventional centralized system of ownership, sensing, and governance. Decentralized protocols enable non-conventional ecological actors, like non-human organisms, ecosystems, and even whole bioregions, to own their own currency, deeds, and information. Ecosystems are, in effect, autonomous funds or trusts of information and currency that disperse resources towards different stakeholders or initiatives based on the satisfaction of contractual conditions. These entities, broadly referred to as Ecological Institutions, are an integration of regenerative economics enabled by blockchains and DAOs with the rights of nature movement, proposed by the emerging field of Earth law.

Figure 11. Regenerate Cascadia's evolving structural framework for supporting bioregional funding



Regenerate Cascadia's living structural framework can be viewed as a system for the coherent flow of resources- educational, financial, inspirational, and cultural - that supports ongoing bioregional regeneration outcomes and learning. The framework enables capital to be distributed from a large bioregional fund into smaller landscape- level funds that deliver resources to decentralized projects according to the needs of ecoregions and landscapes. This ensures governance power is held by those closest to the work through trust-based networks of relationships that connect and align diverse projects within a landscape-level vision and strategy. The framework provides a comprehensive intermediary between local communities and funders. This enables effective cooperation, coordination, and governance across the bioregion to optimize strategic outcomes.

Representing diversity

A key tenet of the framework is the commitment to the representation of diverse voices at all scales, including those of ecosystems and keystone species, ensuring that feedback loops from across the whole system enable collective intelligence to inform future actions. This supports the whole system to see itself (co-sense), learn (co-presence), and iterate (co-create), enabling connected and concurrent local and bioregional agency to solve problems at the appropriate scales. Regenerate Cascadia's structures are built with one of the movement's core goals in mind – to prototype a series of replicable transformational templates that return'

right relationship' to the Earth as a central organizing premise for finance, while evolving how we live and work together cooperatively across scales. A core foundation of Regenerate Cascadia are 'Regenerate Hubs', which hold the governance capacity to manage a fund for a discrete landscape across diverse stakeholders. Regenerate Hubs operate in several ways, including:

- working with local communities and weaving relationships to develop a long-term vision aligned with the overall bioregional vision of Regenerate Cascadia;
- identifying and engaging voices that need to be present;
- maintaining a portfolio of regenerative projects within their defined landscape areas;
- stewarding an annual landscape budget; and
- maintaining team coherence.

Structured for regeneration

Each Hub has a core team that facilitates/helps establish conditions for cooperation and trust and is accountable for administrative and reporting requirements. Each landscape features Bioregional Learning Centers that facilitate the cocreation of place-based frameworks and serve as foundational education spaces for sense-making and decision-making in the community. These centers monitor, evaluate, and manage the dynamic flow of an information commons using shared metrics for social, cultural, and ecological impact that supports robust fund reporting and continuous learning. Hubs primarily collaborate with members of Regenerate Cascadia from within a particular landscape, and are represented by a network of Ecoregional Councils – governance bodies responsible for creating ecoregional budgets that maintain the connections between local and bioregional scales.

Regenerate Cascadia's structural framework serves several other core functions in supporting landscape leaders, including bioregional 'Guilds' made up of knowledge communities responsible for providing tools and resources around specific regenerative topics, and connecting learning and networks across landscapes. Hubs and Guilds undertake their own projects and activities while sharing news, updates, resources, directories, and events for a specific place or topic in a way that is meaningful for all participants. Regenerate Cascadia supports the Hubs and Guilds' core teams and services by administering a portion of all funds raised; providing opportunities to practice healthy budgeting and governance with small sums of money; and growing their decision-making and governance capacities ahead of receiving larger flow funding. Finally, the non-profit backbone of Regenerate Cascadia is maintained through 'Bioregional Stewardship Councils', which directly assist with communications, outreach, fundraising, finance, legal, and reporting requirements, and a Bioregional Congress– an assembly comprised of Guilds and Ecoregional Councils to govern a shared Cascadia bioregional vision.

Each of the structural components Regenerate Cascadia is collaboratively building are demonstrable templates that are adaptable, replicable, and scalable in other localities. They are significant, not only for a single bioregion, but as a living framework for movements emerging around the world. By connecting and resourcing those doing the work in their communities through the support of core backbone teams of bioregional weavers; providing knowledge and resource sharing through Guilds that weave between landscapes; and co-creating the digital infrastructure for coordination and communication, Regenerate Cascadia

enables coordinated, coherent processes for bioregional learning and regeneration. This framework provides a governance model for bioregional funding, enabling capital to flow to where it is needed on the ground, and building the foundations for funding the transition to a regenerative economy.

This Case Study on **The Edge Prize** is an Excerpt from the book **Bioregional Financing Facilities: Reimagining Finance to Regenerate Our Planet**, by Samantha Power and Leon Seefeld. To see other case studies, or to buy or download the book, visit www.biofi.earth.

Authors



Samantha Power
(The BioFi Project / Finance for Gaia)



Leon Seefeld
(Dark Matter Labs /
Dark Matter Capital Systems)

Publishers

The BioFi Project: Oakland, California, United States; Dark Matter Labs: London, UK; and Buckminster Fuller Institute: San Francisco, California, United States

Publication Date

June 2024



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License](#). You are free to share and adapt this material, provided you give appropriate credit, do not use it for commercial purposes, and distribute your contributions under the same license. For uses beyond these, written permission from the publisher is required.

Acknowledgements

Advisors

- Stuart Cowan, Ph.D. (Buckminster Fuller Institute)
- Edward West (Applied Alchemy / The BioFi Project)
- Indy Johar (Dark Matter Labs / Dark Matter Capital Systems)
- Raj Kalia (Dark Matter Labs / Dark Matter Capital Systems)
- Jan Hania (Biome Trust)
- Matthew Monahan (Biome Trust / Ma Earth)
- Karl Burkart (One Earth)
- Justin Adams (Ostara)

Note: While the advisors provided important guidance on the development of the report, the authors did not ask them to endorse the text in full.

Research Assistance and Glossary

Tyler Wakefield (Interdependent)

Design & Illustration

Arianna Smaron (Dark Matter Labs)
Madelyn Capozzi (Dark Matter Labs)

Cover Art

Aaron Brodeur (Applied Alchemy)

Editing

Nick Paul (nicewriting)
Tyler Wakefield (Interdependent)
Taya Seidler (Applied Alchemy)

Case Studies

Alex Corren (ReCommon)
Alana Peterson, Kalah Duncan, and India Rose Matharu-Daley (Spruce Root)
Austin Wade Smith (Regen Foundation)
Clare Politano (Hylo)
Edward West (Edge Prize)
Faith Flanigan and Ruth Andrade (Regenerosity)
Isabel Carlisle (Bioregional Learning Centre South Devon)
Keoni Lee (Hawai'i Investment Ready)

Reggie Luedtke (Golden Bay Bioregion & Mohua 2042)

Sarah Prosser and Karin Müller (Bioregional Weaving Labs)
Spencer Beebe, Ian Gill, Christopher Brookfield, Cheryl Chen, and Edward West (Salmon Nation)
Taya Seidler, Clare Attwell, Brandon Letsinger, and Sheri Herndon (Regenerate Cascadia)

This work benefited from guidance and technical support from the Buckminster Fuller Institute Design Lab under the “Bioregional Resilience and Regeneration” track.

It received financial support from:



And in-kind support from:

