Last month MES student Graham Klag presented his work on "The Art of Education for Salmonid Ecology" at the Oregon Chapter of American Fisheries Societies' Annual Meeting. Held in Bend Oregon at the River House, the conference was a combination of oral and poster presentations. The conference was a composition of fish biologist, educators and other conservation professionals exploring the nexus between science and restoration. A variety of projects were presented, with a particular focus on habitat restoration projects for salmonid species.

Graham's presentation explored the value of place-based experiential art education in communicating the role Oregon’s coastal estuaries play in the life histories' of salmonids and other species. His presentation focused on how the agricultural conversion has reduced the productivity of many Oregon estuaries, and how the restoration of environments such as the Salmon River Estuary within the Cascade Head Biosphere Reserve, represent a vital opportunity to study and showcase the role new anthropogenic changes made to the environment play in the lives of fish and future generations. His presentation highlighted his work on the Oregon Coast with the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, the U.S. Forest Service and the Salmon Drift Creek Watershed Council with students from Taft 7-12, who learned the story of the Salmon River's Estuary restoration, and how agricultural and ecological histories shape what we see today.

Through mixed methods of field and studio work students learned the role estuaries play in the life cycles of salmon and 70% of all marine organisms. The presentation showcased students' experiences and work products from their visits to the Salmon River's estuary’s reference and restored marsh areas were students conducted channel dimension and vegetative transect monitoring, identifying native tidal marsh grasses and the species associations with estuary elevation. At the Sitka Center, students translated their field observations and coursework into wood block prints of what they thought sinuous estuary channels should look like. The completed prints were then connected to form one long sinuous channel and shared as the one art piece.