

Dear Partners, Interns, Alumni, and Community Members,

I want to share an important update regarding the future of Mt. Adams Institute (MAI). After extensive reflection and careful consideration, the Board has made the decision to cease operations as of December 31, 2026. This decision was not made lightly. It reflects both the realities facing our federal partnerships in the current political climate and some key personnel changes. This has been a hard decision—one that carries real emotion for me personally and, I know, for many of you who have invested time, trust and care in MAI over the years. I want to explain why this decision was made.

The mounting partnership and funding obstacles resulting from the current White House Administration's reductions in staffing, cuts to funding and interference with partnership mechanisms have dramatically affected our organizational operations. You may recall that MAI had to lay off 60% of an amazing team in March of 2025. Shortly after, MAI experienced the unforeseen loss of AmeriCorps funding which reduced our capacity to offer our core programming. In November, I announced my intent to retire in 2026 and other staff also announced their decisions to seek new life directions. The compounding loss of institutional knowledge and expertise paired with existing federal impacts and future uncertainty made recovery from our current status unrealistic.

MAI has always been more than an organization. It has been a community grounded in the mission to strengthen the relationship between people and the natural world. We've done that through thoughtful partnerships, meaningful programs and, most importantly, a focus on strong relationships. I've had the privilege of seeing firsthand how this work has shaped careers, strengthened partnerships, and supported stewardship here at home and across the country. None of that would have been possible without you.

Between now and the end of 2026, we are committed to navigating this shutdown with integrity. That means supporting current participants and partners, honoring our commitments to the best of our abilities, utilizing our resources to support others and approaching this transition with transparency and care. While this chapter is coming to a close, we want the ending to reflect the values that have always guided MAI.

What is comforting to me is knowing that MAI's legacy lives on through the lives we've touched and the work we have accomplished—through the people who carry this work forward in agencies, nonprofits, Tribes and communities across the country. The relationships built through MAI don't end with the organization.

For those who might be wondering, our Sense of Place (SOP) program will live on! Over the past several years with MAI, Sarah Fox has helped SOP grow into an irreplaceable community asset. The support it has generated in the greater Columbia River Gorge will allow SOP to move forward and continue to grow. We are grateful to have been a part of this pivotal chapter.

There will be more opportunities in the coming months to share updates, reflect together, and acknowledge what this community has built. For now, I want to say thank you—for your partnership, your belief in this work, and the many ways you've helped make Mt. Adams Institute what it is.

With deep appreciation,
Aaron Stanton
Executive Director