



2019-2020

# ANNUAL REPORT

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POLK



Soil & Water  
Conservation District





## 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The District strives to practice goals from it's long range plan through three main objectives:

**Community and Landowner Engagement, by Providing Technical Assistance, and by partnering with other local natural resource groups to broaden the scope of work we can all accomplish together.**

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# Community and Landowner Engagement

Each year one of the best ways we make ourselves known out there is through community and landowner engagement. We like to keep some activities consistent so that people come to associate us with certain events that happen every year. Like annually hosting the NRCS Local Working Group Meeting, holding our seasonal native plant sales, and joining the Fourth of July Parade in Independence, towing our giant Chinook salmon educational display, “Claudia”.

We also try to keep up with providing current best management practice workshops for our constituents, for example the Drinking Waters Provider Workshop where we partnered with OSU Extension and the Luckiamute Watershed Council. Below are some brief descriptions of outreach events we hosted in fiscal year 2019-2020.

## Polk County Local Work Group

At this meeting we recap constituents’ natural resource concerns and priorities from the previous year, report on how the District and it’s partners have been able to address those needs either with a funding pool or with information to further educate, and then discuss any changes to those priorities moving forward.

Every year there are water quality concerns raised. At the 2019- 2020 meetings we addressed those concerns by sharing current Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding available for cover cropping in orchards, proposed utilizing the NRCS National Water Quality Initiative funds to improve groundwater potability, and talked about our Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) program. The CREP incentive program utilizes not only streamside vegetative buffer practices, but also grass filter stripping, and the ability to convert agricultural land back to wetlands along stream sides in marginal ag land.

## 4th of July Parade

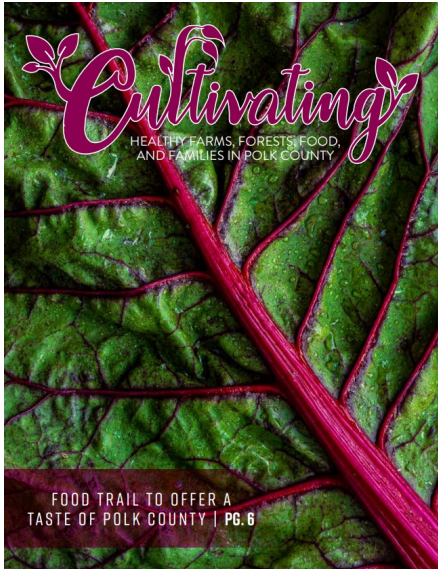
Each year we walk in the annual Fourth of July parade through Monmouth/Independence, along with our educational display “Claudia”, the LWC, and NRCS employees. The crowds reached up to 15,000 people who lined the three mile parade route. Our 2019 theme was “Trash in the streets drains to the creeks, pick it up!” Our team of walkers carried trash and recycling bags and gathered trash and recycling along the way to promote awareness of how much trash is generated along parade routes like this one.

## Reaching Out to Landowners

- ♦ 50 people stopped by our booth at the Polk County Fair
- ♦ 50 people at Dry Farming Workshop
- ♦ 965 plants sold at our Fall Bulb Sale
- ♦ 1300 plants sold at our Winter Bare Root Sale

# Community and Landowner Engagement

## Cont.

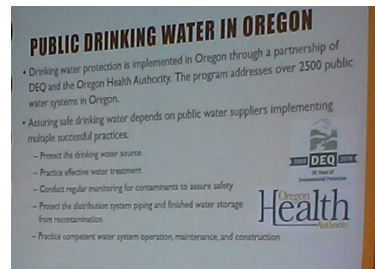


### Other Highlights in Community & Landowner Engagement

Other events we participated in throughout the year included planning and participating in several workshops such as OSU Extension's "Living on the Land Series," a CORE certification class, and a workshop on Dry Farming. We also published 12 quarterly articles in our Cultivating magazine, hosted a landowner meeting on the new Ag Channel Maintenance guidelines, and overhauled our website.

### Drinking Water Providers Forum

The Drinking Water Providers Forum was held in January of 2020. Our partners were LWC and OSU Extension. The forum focused on educating people about drinking water that comes from wells located on or adjacent to ag lands. Information was provided about how to care for and maintain water quality from these wells. We had a panel discussion of drinking water providers attend and answer questions from over 60 participants.



### Reaching Out to Landowners

- ◆ 60 people at the Drinking Water Providers Forum
- ◆ 30 people at CORE recert class
- ◆ 30 people at annual Local Working Group meeting
- ◆ 30 people at Jont Creek Tour – post culvert replacement



# Technical Assistance

The second goal of the District is to provide hands on technical assistance to our constituents on a variety of natural resource topics, including: protection and enhancement of native plant and wildlife habitat, prevention of soil erosion, controlling invasive plant and animal species, following ag water quality rules around crop and manure management, and maintaining overall water quality in the watershed.

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, we provided over **45 landowners** with one-on-one technical assistance on topics ranging from developing pasture for livestock, controlling the velocity of neighboring culvert flow onto farm ground, establishing grass seed for hay fields, upland woodlot management, establishing an irrigation reservoir, livestock exclusion fencing, and establishing oak woodlands and ground nesting bird habitat. We also provided assistance for streamside (riparian) restoration, failing culvert replacements, general forest management, and weed eradication.

**In addition to one-on-one technical assistance, we continued working on current programming and developing new programming.**

**As part of our ongoing Salt Creek Collaborative research** we developed a plan with our partners from the OSU Water Resources Department for monitoring water quantity and quality. Forty Onset HOBO water temperature data loggers were purchased and placement locations were identified with relevant landowners. We were successful in installing 10 stream temperature data loggers at publicly accessible portions of Salt Creek.

**Our Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) received some upgrades;** the district applied for and received funding for a fulltime CREP technician, up from ½ time. This CREP contract was awarded to the district for the 2020-2021 biennium. We began taking enrollments and continued to service existing contracts.

**NRCS Technical Assistance** for oak woodlands continued from projects originating out of the 2014 RCPP grant shared with the Yamhill SWCD.

With the collaboration of our partners at the Natural Resource Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, we developed and were awarded a new five year **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** funding pool with over \$1,250,000, for Oregon white oak restoration. This time the funding pool is for Polk County alone, signaling the enormous interest Polk county residents have in preserving this rare and declining habitat.

The district, in conjunction with USFWS, applied for and received **grant money from the Oregon State Weed Board (OSWB)** to eradicate the noxious weed Water Primrose and reseed/establish native and endangered plant populations within the Baskett Slough NWR and in the private lands immediately downstream of the refuge. Planting activities began in fall of 2019 and continued through 2020.

With an OWEB grant awarded to The Institute for Applied Ecology and others; **we are now working to establish populations of pure strain Kinkaid's lupine on 7.5 acres within the District's Cornerstone Project conservation easement.** On a larger scale this grant will work to establish stepping stones for the endangered species Fender's Blue butterfly by creating more habitat across a patchwork of perpetually protected lands in three neighboring counties. Yamhill, Polk, and Benton.

The district continued work with the Trust for Public Land to **finalize a real estate transaction to steward the largest single tract of conserved property in the county, 183.33 acres, titled Smithfield Oaks.** The property is scheduled to change ownership in late 2020.





# Partnerships

Last but definitely not least, the third practice we work to preach is engaging in partnerships with other groups to reach as many people in our communities as possible. **Through collaboration, we can accomplish so much more.**

Here are some examples of ways we engaged with partners during 2019-2020.

The District Farm specialist began a conversation between the Greater Yamhill Watershed Council, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to restore a stretch of salmonid bearing stream in Gooseneck Creek **in the Mill Creek watershed**. Work would include reshaping the streambanks, replacing a failing culvert, and placing logs and other **large woody debris at strategic sites along the creek**. Funding will be awarded for this work from the BLM in late 2020.

**District hosted a partner meeting with NRCS and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to discuss options for funding a program through the NRCS – National Water Quality Initiative** for source water protection. During the January 2020 Local Working Group meeting we facilitated a panel discussion for constituents where local experts with NRCS, DEQ, and OSU Extension outlined the program and fielded questions from stakeholders.

**We collaborated with ODFW and other Willamette Valley districts to inventory a backlog of records and data pertaining to tax incentive programs that benefit riparian lands and wildlife habitat in Polk county.** We provided funding and attended progress and planning meetings. This inventory was completed in summer of 2020. All ODFW contracts and county deferrals on the books have been categorized and prioritized for management goals moving forward.

District provided input for Tyler Manistas of the Oregon Department of Agriculture for new notification forms to be used to **notify ODA of ag channel maintenance**.

## Partnerships

- 💧 27 partner events or meetings attended by district
- 💧 9 events hosted by SWCD for partners
- 💧 120 attendees at events hosted by SWCD for partners

# Partnerships cont.

**District Farm specialist toured upper reaches of Willamette River with OPRD Willamette Greenway Manager assessing the extent of Water Primrose infestation and how that is impacting efforts further within the county.**

District Farm specialist attended a WAIN (Willamette Aquatic Invasives Network) meeting, focused on redefining their scope and efforts for the coming year.

**The District began collaborations with OSU Extension Polk and Marion Counties, to hire a full time Small Farms Outreach Coordinator** who will focus on ag related education and outreach, including ag water quality workshops addressing soil and riparian health.

**District manager participates on the board of Polk Extension Citizen Advisory Network “PECAN”** to promote NR workshops, training, ag studies, and rural educational programs, like 4H.

**District manager made a presentation along with NRCS to a local “Friendship Force International”** group from Mexico about restoration work done at a privately owned oak upland prairie site.

**District manager participated in an event to develop an Ag - tourism trail for Polk County** and attended and presented an award for public speaking at the Polk 4H awards banquet.



## Grants Received

- 💧 ODA Capacity Grant – \$24,995
- 💧 ODA Scope of Work Grant – \$58,319
- 💧 NRCS – 2014 RCPP N. Willamette Upland Oak TA Grant- \$24,267
- 💧 NRCS – Polk Habitat Restoration Technical Assistance Grant– \$11,275
- 💧 NRCS CREP TA grant – \$39,879
- 💧 OWEB Small Grants- \$37,000
- 💧 OWEB Jont Creek Restoration Grant – \$95,300
- 💧 OSWB Ludwigia Control in Baskett Slough – \$17,172



# Coming in 2020-2021

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- Smithfield Oaks Conservation Easement acquisition completed
- NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program – Polk County Oak Habitat Restoration 5 year technical assistance and oak restoration funding awarded
- OSWB – Ludwigia Phase 3 – Baskett Sleugh weed control grant awarded
- Small Farms Outreach Coordinator- Shared outreach position for small farms and agriculture hired!



*YOUR LOCAL SOURCE OF CONSERVATION INFORMATION AND  
EDUCATION IN POLK COUNTY, OREGON SINCE 1966!*

## Get in Touch

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