



2020-2021

ANNUAL REPORT

POLK  Soil & Water
Conservation District





2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

The District strives to practice goals from its 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 &
Landowner Engagement**

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**Coming in
2021-2022**

Community and Landowner Engagement

Each year, one of the best ways we make ourselves known 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. Some examples include: hosting the annual 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 'Planning and Planting Your Native Garden' workshop where we partnered with the Luckiamute Watershed Council, North Santiam Watershed Council, NRCS, Marion, Benton and Yamhill SWCDs. Below are some brief descriptions of outreach events we hosted in fiscal year 2020-2021.

Polk County Local Work Group Meeting

At this meeting we recap constituents' natural resource concerns and priorities from the previous year, report on how the District and its 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.

For the 2021 Local Work Group Meeting, we focused on the topics of forest health, oak woodland health, soil erosion, water quantity, invasive weeds, water quality and stream function. We discussed funding opportunities including: basin strategy funding, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) focused on oak woodland and savannah restoration.

Polk County Fair

Each year we attend the Polk County Fair. Four staff members helped set up and manage a booth at the 3-day event. The booth provided various literature covering a wide variety of ag water quality topics, including our CREP program. Activities were provided to engage youth, including: a sauerkraut making demonstration, "Claudia" the Chinook salmon display, a fishing activity, an herb-growing demonstration, bug Bingo, bicycle blender and Caesar the "No Drama Llama" attended.

Reaching Out to Landowners

- 💧 200 people stopped by our booth at the Polk County Fair
- 💧 17 people at Bio-Control Workshop & 42 watched recording
- 💧 Over 3,000 plants sold at our Native Plant Sale
- 💧 32 E-blasts sent to over 300 Subscribers

Community and Landowner Engagement

Cont.



Other Highlights in Community & Landowner Engagement

Other events we participated in throughout the year included participating in several farmers markets across Polk County. Numerous resources were provided, including backyard conservation publications.

We also published 12 quarterly articles in our Cultivating magazine highlighting weed control, technical assistance and programs.

Biocontrol for the Farm

The Biocontrol for the Farm workshop series was held in June and July of 2020. Our partner was OSU Extension. The workshop focused on educating people on how you can manage insects, weeds, and other pests while increasing beneficial habitat on your farm. The three themed sessions were hosted via zoom. Other presenters were from the Xerces Society and the Oregon Department of Agriculture.



Reaching Out to Landowners

- 💧 Revamped website
- 💧 12 articles in Cultivating
- 💧 44,000 Cultivating Newsletters published
- 💧 24 people attended the 2021 Local Working Group meeting

Technical Assistance

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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 county.

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, we provided over **52 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 to invest in two weather stations. They will also be placed in Salt Creek so that we can share more localized weather patterns with the land managers that live there. They may also be used by schools to practice citizen science.

Our Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) finalized one contract for 21.63 acres / .76 stream miles and secured 1 new enrollment of 35 acres.

We provide NRCS Technical Assistance for oak woodlands and savannah restoration associated with the **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** grant. This grant is in collaboration with 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. Our partnership has strengthened our RCPP funding pool with over \$1,250,000, for Oregon white oak restoration.

In addition to the RCPP grant funding, the District was also awarded an NRCS TA grant of \$31,000 to finish out our prior RCPP from 2014-2019 and for administrative assistance.

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 institute for Applied Ecology was awarded an additional restoration grant with OWEB to add another 6 acres of rare Willamette daisy to the mix at Cornerstone, **totaling 13 acres of restored habitat.**

The district continued work with the Trust for Public Land and **finalized a real estate transaction in September 2020 to steward the largest single tract of conserved property in the county, 183.33 acres, titled 'Smithfield Oaks'.** A ceremony to thank the Wainwrights for their cooperation will be held the summer of 2022.





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 2020-2021:

The District hired an Agriculture Outreach Coordinator. This is a shared position with OSU Extension—Polk and Marion Counties. This position is focused on Small Farming and Ag Water Quality Outreach. This partnership secures and shares funding sources to promote outreach activities.


The Agriculture Outreach Coordinator met with a group of other local SWCD partners to create an outreach group to collaborate on future projects.

We also participated in the Polk County Extension District Board Meeting, spring PECAN meeting, Polk County Fair Board Planning meeting, and began planning for the Living on the Land and Growing Farms Workshop in collaboration with OSU Extension.

Our District Manager created a radio spot on the local community radio station—KMUZ to address how agal blooms can be prevented and how the District can help ag producers create riparian buffers to help control nitrogen build up. This partnership with KMUZ will grow in 2022.

Finally, we want to **acknowledge the land we work on**. The Polk Soil and Water Conservation District is located within the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya, who are represented today by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians. Since time immemorial, they have been the historic land managers of this region.

The Polk SWCD wants to express gratitude for the land itself and the people who have cared for this land throughout the generations, continuing the connection to place. We commit to caring for the land through native habitat restoration and promoting environmental stewardship.



Coming in 2021-2022

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- Completion of Smithfield Oaks Conservation Easement management plan
- Hire Outreach Coordinator– will work on general outreach for the District and build partnerships
- Final OWEB plant establishment grant to perform shrub clearing and planting over 12 acres at Smithfield Oaks in fall of 2021
- Development and production of a Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) video to support best management practices developed by Willamette Valley tribal culture, coming fall of 2021
- A new biennium of OWEB small grant funds will be awarded to our small grant team —11 in the fall of 2021, for \$100,000.
- The District will gravel both entry roads and turnarounds for our 2 conservation properties in fall of 2021.



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

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