

Cultivating

HEALTHY FARMS, FORESTS, FOOD,
AND FAMILIES IN POLK COUNTY

WEBINAR TAKES AN IN-DEPTH LOOK
AT LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION | **PG. 4**

WHO WE ARE



The Polk County Office of the Oregon State University Extension Service provides research-based educational information and programs in Agriculture, Forestry, 4-H/Youth and Family and Community Development for the citizens of Polk County.

OSU Extension's mission is to convey research-based knowledge in a way that is useful for people to improve their lives, their homes, and their communities.

OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS

289 E Ellendale, Suite 301
Dallas OR 97338 | 503.623.8395
extension.oregonstate.edu/polk
Mon-Wed 9am-12pm, 1pm-5pm
Thurs 9am-12pm
Friday Closed or by appointment

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

ALISHA HUTCHISON | OFFICE MANAGER & LOCAL LIAISON
971.612.0022

JESSICA SHUMAKE | OFFICE SPECIALIST
503-623-8395

RACHEL GREEN | OFFICE SPECIALIST
503-623-8395

BROOKE EDMUNDS | COMMUNITY HORTICULTURE
971.612.0026

AUDREY COMERFORD | AGRITOURISM
503.689.8241

JENIFER CRUICKSHANK | DAIRY
971.600.1222

MITCH LIES | CULTIVATING EDITOR
mitchlies@comcast.net

CHRISSY LUCAS | WELL WATER PROGRAM
541.766.3556

RICHARD RIGGS | REGIONAL DIRECTOR
503.269.6389

RACHEL BRANDON | 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
971.612.0023

HAYLEY WHITE | AGRICULTURE OUTREACH COORDINATOR
971.612.0027

ANDREA HUNTER | 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
971.612.0029

TODD ANDERSON | SMALL FARMS FACULTY
541-713-5007

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Go to extension.oregonstate.edu/events to see and register for OSU Extension events and polkswcd.com for event details

MARCH

12-21 - Spring Livestock Series | Tuesdays & Thursdays
6pm Online

13 - Polk SWCD Board meeting, 6-8pm, Polk SWCD office

14 - 4-H Animal Science Online: Carcass Meat Evaluation | 6:30pm - 8:00pm Online

19 - 4-H Cloverbud Class: Saving for what? | 10am, 4:30pm and 6pm at Polk Extension Office

APRIL

10 - Polk SWCD Board meeting, 6-8pm, Polk SWCD office

11 - 4-H Animal Science Online: Careers in Animal Science | 6:30pm - 8:00pm Online

16 - 4-H Cloverbud Class: Science of Felting | 10am, 4:30pm and 6pm at Polk Extension Office

MAY

8 - Polk SWCD Board meeting, 6-8pm, Polk SWCD office

9 - 4-H Animal Science Online: Dairy Project 101: Cows and Goats | 6:30pm - 8:00pm Online

10 - 11 - Polk County Master Gardener Plant Sale | Polk County Fairgrounds

21 - 4-H Cloverbud Class: Science of Sound | 10am, 4:30pm and 6pm at Polk Extension Office

23 - Clackamas Tree School | 8:15am - 5:15pm, Oregon City

27 - OSU Extension & Polk SWCD CLOSED for Memorial Day

JUNE

12 - Polk SWCD Board meeting, 6-8pm, Polk SWCD office

13 - 4-H Animal Sciences Online: Leg Wrapping for Horses | 6:30pm - 8:00pm Online

19 - OSU Extension and Polk SWCD CLOSED for Juneteenth

WHO WE ARE



**POLK SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Nearly 3,000 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) across the United States are helping local people conserve land, water, forest, wildlife, and related natural resources. SWCDs are charged with directing programs to protect local renewable natural resources.

Polk SWCD was formed in April 1966, and promotes erosion control, reduction of invasive species, improvements to farms and forests, control of animal waste, as well as improving wildlife habitat and water quality/quantity issues in Polk County. The Polk SWCD is administered by 7 locally elected volunteer directors representing 5 zones and 2 at-large positions within the county. The Polk SWCD is a source of information and education on natural resources.

OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS

580 Main Street, Suite A
Dallas OR 97338 | 503.623.9680
www.polkswcd.com
Mon-Fri 8am-4:30pm

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

KEVIN PORTER | DISTRICT MANAGER
manager@polkswcd.com

MARC BELL | SENIOR RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST
marc.bell@polkswcd.com

MORGAN NEIL | OUTREACH COORDINATOR
morgan.neil@polkswcd.com

HAYLEY IVERSON | ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
clerk@polkswcd.com

BETH THIEL | RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST - FARM/FOREST
beth.thiel@polkswcd.com

Polk SWCD is an equal opportunity provider and employer and prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information should contact the district office at 503.623.9680.

Oregon State University Extension Service prohibits discrimination in all its programs, services, activities, and materials on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, veteran's status, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Webinar takes an in-depth look at livestock production | 4 |
| Calling all Critters! | 6 |
| OSU Extension leads first-ever Agritourism economic impact analysis in the Willamette Valley | 7 |
| Environmental DNA revolutionizes species monitoring capabilities | 8 |
| Congratulations Master Gardeners! | 9 |
| Mud management in the wet season | 10 |
| OSU Extension to host Introductory class on forest management plans | 11 |
| Make an IMPACT! | 13 |
| New Small Farm faculty to address specialty crops | 14 |
| Polk SWCD awarded grant funding for technical assistance and outreach | 15 |



Scan this QR code to give your feedback and
enter into the drawing for a \$25 gift certificate
for the Polk SWCD native plant sale!

Published Mar. 13, 2023

**Designed and Published by the
Itemizer-Observer
Printed by
Eagle Web Press | Salem, OR**

**147 SE Court Street | Dallas, OR
503.623.2373
www.polkio.com**

CULTIVATING is a quarterly publication of Oregon
State University Polk County Extension Service and
Polk Soil And Water Conservation District. Included in
these pages, readers can find practical information on
farm and forest management, on home and lifestyle
choices, and on the many programs and services
available through the Service and the District.



PHOTO BY HAYLEY WHITE

Local farmer Bob Klinger presenting at a past sheep field day in Polk County. A spring webinar series on livestock management put on by Polk County Extension faculty Hayley White will include a field day along with four webinars on topics ranging from livestock diets to pasture management.

WEBINAR TAKES AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

By Mitch Lies
Cultivating Editor

Each month, Hayley White, Small Farms Outreach Coordinator for Polk and Marion counties, fields multiple questions on pasture management, ruminant nutrition and other livestock-related issues.

“I would say these calls make up the bulk of the questions that I get,” White said.

White, who holds a master’s degree in animal and range sciences and has worked extensively in livestock management and education, is more than happy to

disseminate information over the phone and to visit farms when warranted.

She recently decided to bring her expertise to a wider audience. White is putting on a full-scale webinar series beginning March 12. The series will include four webinar sessions spaced over two weeks and conclude with a farm visit. Interested participants can sign up at any point during the series.

One of three Extension faculty in the small farms program with partial appointments in Polk County, White said she organized the webinar around topics she regularly hears about in phone

calls. She added that the topics are designed to address issues specific to the region.

The first session, featuring pasture management, will include information on weed management and on how to identify the most common poisonous plants that producers encounter in mid-Willamette Valley pastures, a topic she addresses often.

“I get calls every summer of livestock getting sick, dying, or people asking me to come out to see if what they have is toxic,” White said. “So it is important to get that information out to producers.”

The second session will focus

on livestock nutrition with an emphasis on the dos and don'ts of minerals. "Different livestock species have different needs, and different life stages within species have different needs," White said. "In fact, some minerals can be toxic to one species and not another. A mineral mix for cattle, for example, often contains copper and sheep can be vulnerable to copper toxicity."

The second session also will provide information on what kind of veterinarian provisions a producer should have on hand and when to call a veterinarian for animal health.

"We will look at what common things you should have in a vet medical kit and how you need to develop a relationship with a veterinarian so when you do have an emergency, you know who to contact and they know you," White said. "A common issue I hear a lot is that people try to get into a vet when they have an emergency, but they haven't developed a client relationship with that veterinarian and can't get in. So, it is very important to have a relationship with a veterinarian and to get something set up ahead of time for emergencies."

The third session will include a topic familiar with producers in rainy climates, controlling mud and manure on the farm. "That is another common issue that we see a lot, especially this time of year when it's wet and soils are saturated," White said. "Ideally, you should have your livestock off your pastures and in an overwinter area. Not only is it better for animal health in the long run, but it is a big problem

with pastures when they get turned into mud. You get more weeds and less productive forage in those cases."

The fourth session will focus on how to renovate a pasture. "There are many different ways to go about renovating your pasture depending on the problems that you are currently seeing, why you want to renovate, and do you want to do it with or without the use of herbicides," White said.

"And it really is tricky, because there is not a general pasture mix (of plants) I can recommend," she said. "It depends on what livestock species you have. For example, people with horses need to have something that can take more of a beating versus something that's going to be the most nutritious and productive forage, because you really need something that can hold up to heavy use."

Among the most common topics White address with constituents are related to toxic plants, including questions about tansy ragwort.

"Tansy can be toxic mostly to horses and cattle," she added. "It also is technically toxic to sheep and goats, but they tend to have less of an issue with it. It is an accumulative toxin that builds up in the body over time."

White said that the best time to treat for tansy ragwort is in the spring and fall, when plants are small and more susceptible to herbicides and easier to pull up because the ground is more saturated than in summer months. She advised produc-



PHOTO BY AUDREY COMERFORD

Hayley White, Small Farms Outreach Coordinator for Polk and Marion Counties, is putting on a spring webinar series for livestock owners this March.

LIVESTOCK WEBINAR

The OSU Extension Mid-Willamette Valley Spring Livestock Webinar Series will run every Tuesday and Thursday from March 12 to March 21 with a farm visit on March 23.

Cost for the series is \$5 and includes access to all live sessions and recordings, as well as participation in the farm visit, provided space is available. Interested parties can sign up at any point during the series.

SPRING LIVESTOCK SERIES

**Tuesday and Thursday at 6 pm
March 12-21 | Online**

March 12

- Work smarter not harder for Better Pastures - OSU Extension
- Managing Weeds & Poisonous Plants - Polk SWCD

March 14

- Minerals for Grazing Animals - OSU Extension
- Creating Med Kit & When to Call your Vet - OSU

March 19

- Staying above Water: Controlling Mud & Manure on the Farm Clackamas SWCD

March 21

- Need to Renovate your Pasture? Let's talk options - OSU Extension

CONTINUE ON, PAGE 6



CONTINUES FROM, PAGE 5

ers to reference the OSU Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook for more information on tansy ragwort control and identification. <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pub/weed-2022-pnw-weed-management-handbook>.

The webinar series will run every Tuesday and Thursday,

beginning with the March 12 session and ending with a farm visit on Saturday, March 23. The sessions will be led by different facilitators: White will kick off the series with the session on pasture management on March 12; Former Extension faculty Gene Pirelli will lead the nutrient management session on March 14; Suzie Cloutier from Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District will lead the session on

controlling mud and manure on farms on March 19; And Extension small farms faculty Melissa Fery will lead the session on pasture renovation on March 21. All sessions begin at 6 p.m. and will be available to stream at any time after they run.

"I think it will be a valuable learning experience for many livestock owners in the area," White said.

CALLING ALL CRITTERS!

Critter Campus is back

By Andrea Hunter

OSU Extension

4-H Youth Development

After a pandemic-induced hiatus, the almost 30-year tradition of Critter Campus has returned to Polk County. This 4-H event is dedicated to educating both 4-H and non-4-H families about the care, management and all things small animals! The event was held Saturday, January 27th at the Polk County Fairgrounds.

This event featured an array of classes, including poultry, rabbit, cavy, and cat showmanship, as well as sessions on evaluation and judging, project planning and expert Q&A. There were even classes for adult 4-H leaders like, "How to Make Meetings Fun!"

The classes were taught by 4-H leaders, youth teen leaders, dedi-



PHOTO BY ANDREA HUNTER

Samantha Bagby, Polk County 4-H leader, teaches a session on Poultry Showmanship at the 2024 Critter Campus.

cated volunteers, and professionals in the field.

This year's Critter Campus drew a crowd of 258 attendees, with 110 of them being youth from over 13 counties, including Polk, Yamhill, Marion, Washington, Coos, Tillamook, Gilliam, Deschutes, Linn, Lane, and more. The event was met with great enthusiasm and apprecia-

tion from the participants.

The success of the event was a result of the collaborative efforts of the Polk County 4-H program's numerous volunteers, faculty and community members. The feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive, and Polk County 4-H is already looking forward to hosting Critter Campus again in 2025!



PHOTO BY AUDREY COMERFORD

Students enjoying a drive flower wreath class on a flower farm.

OSU EXTENSION LEADS FIRST-EVER AGRITOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

By Audrey Comerford

OSU Extension

Agritourism Coordinator

The report *An Initial Economic Impact Estimate of Agritourism in Oregon's Willamette Valley* was published by Oregon State University Extension in February 2024. The report is significant as it provides local evidence of the economic impact of agritourism, including direct sales, which has long been believed to have beneficial impacts for farming operations, but lacked concrete data to support this notion.

Agritourism, which encompasses activities such as farm

tours, farm stays, and direct sales, has been recognized for its potential to generate additional revenue streams, provide employment opportunities for family and community members, and provide education to the public about agriculture. However, until now, there has been a lack of local data to quantify these benefits.

The project was spearheaded by the OSU Extension Agricultural Tourism team, led by Melissa Fery and Audrey Comerford, and took approximately a year and a half to complete. This collaborative effort pulled together outside funders from economic development and tourism organizations, as well as multiple Extension

Service Districts, to support the research. The project team also included retired Oregon State University Economist Bruce Sorte who ran the IMPLAN models and worked with the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Both sets of numbers were ground truth using a survey sent to agritourism operators in the study area by the team.

The study results can be found online at <https://beav.es/cky> for the full report and <https://beav.es/ckF> for the executive summary. This report provides valuable insights into the economic contributions of Agritourism in the Willamette Valley and highlights its importance for local farming communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL DNA REVOLUTIONIZES SPECIES MONITORING CAPABILITIES

By Marc Bell

Polk SWCD

Senior Resource Conservationist

One of the longest-term challenges in environmental habitat restoration is knowing where sensitive species spend their time, and if well-intended restoration efforts are effective or not. This challenge is magnified when the target species are very small, aquatic, nocturnal, or otherwise very good at hiding from visual survey efforts. Visual and auditory surveys for birds, electrofishing, fish traps, and other methods of counting large mammalian species do not work for those more elusive species; those that migrate through an area staying only temporarily can be missed entirely.

Within a proposal pending funding for the Polk SWCD's Cornerstone property, staff will be adopting an exciting new method of survey that addresses all these potential points of failure in collecting accurate species data within the property with eDNA (environmental DNA).

Every individual creature and plant leaves genetic traces of itself as it lives or passes through an area, be that skin flakes and scales, mucus, hair, or any other biological material left behind. Those biological traces can be collected from samples taken from water (flowing or still), soil, and even air samples. The



PHOTO BY FISHBIO

eDNA Concept

water/soil/air sampled can be sent to a laboratory where the DNA of every critter is separated out from the inorganic particles through filtering membranes. While most sequences of DNA are shared across species, segments of unique code specific to each species can be found when compared to specific known species in the genetic database. If a species assessed for occurs in the sample, it will be identified. Even more exciting, based on the abundance of specific DNA coding found in a sample, we can get clues to the overall number of individuals in an area. DNA is resilient in the environment, short of extended ultraviolet light, acidity, or heat. Environmental DNA can be detected and used to positively identify specific spe-

cies of wildlife, microorganisms, or even bacteria, even if it has left the sampling area several days prior.

Long-term eDNA monitoring can promise huge advantages in discovering a more complete picture of an area's biodiversity, which has not been possible until now. Unlike traditional methods, eDNA monitoring requires no interaction with the individuals themselves, no harm or stress to sensitive species by capture, sampling extraction, cataloging, other direct handling, or major habitat-disturbing actions like trawling nets or electrofishing. Amphibians and reptiles, for example, are relatively small, rare, and evasive, making them difficult to detect. eDNA provides an attractive alternative for

aquatic monitoring, especially as amphibians are considered an indicator species for habitat health. Meaning, these species die out in areas of degraded habitat areas and are only able to thrive in high-quality habitat conditions.

There are drawbacks to eDNA monitoring. It should not be used as a replacement, but rather as a complement to traditional survey methods. The presence and abundance of DNA for a particular species will tell a researcher or land manager nothing about the health of the individuals, life

stage, if they're reproducing, or even if they were alive, only the presence and abundance of DNA for that species.

The Polk SWCD is looking forward to testing out this newer technology-based monitoring method at Cornerstone if the proposal is funded, and will be used to detect Steelhead, Chinook, Western pond turtle, Red-legged frog, Western Ridged Mussels (currently petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act), and Western Pearlshell. Survey results will be shared with the community and

data sets collected with partner agencies and organizations. If not funded, the Polk SWCD will undoubtedly use eDNA monitoring in the coming years with other sources of funding. Environmental DNA can be used not only to help better characterize the presence of native species of concern, but also as an early detection system for unwanted, emerging invasive species, leading to rapid response. It's an exciting time in research and will allow us to better implement strategies for habitat restoration.

Congratulations Master Gardeners

By Brooke Edmunds

OSU Extension

Community Horticulturist

Congratulations to the Class of 2023 Polk County Master Gardeners! These fantastic volunteers completed over 60 hours of training and gave at least 40 hours back through volunteering projects.

The Polk County Master Gardener Program provides research-based sustainable gardening information and educational opportunities to the residents of Polk County. They do this through classes and plant problem clinics in various locations throughout the year. The demonstration garden at Independence Mountain Fir Park gives practical examples of sustainable home horticulture



PHOTO BY BROOKE EDMUNDS

New Master Gardener volunteer at the December 2023 awards and graduation ceremony. Congratulations! (Pictured: Debbie M., Dawn R., Maria M., Joe H., Jonathan G., and Bob W. Unable to attend: Barb B., Charlotte W., Kimberly M., Kelly H., and Diane H.)

principles that are the foundation of the Master Gardener Program.

Hands-on gardening classes are being scheduled for Dallas,

Monmouth, and at the Inspiration Garden in Independence. Keep an eye on our events page: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/program/mg/polk/events>

MUD MANAGEMENT IN THE WET SEASON

By **Beth Thiel**

Polk SWCD

Resource Conservationist

While precipitation is an overall benefit, the rainy season can cause problems for pastures, corrals, and livestock. If not prepared, rain can result in pasture degradation, livestock disease and soil erosion that impacts stream water quality. There are straightforward steps to take, and resources available to help design and implement safe, healthy, and environmentally friendly livestock infrastructure.

What's wrong with some mud? For livestock, prolonged exposure to mud can cause health problems like mud fever, bacterial infections, cracking and splitting hooves that are more susceptible to abscesses, thrush, hypothermia, and a general failure to thrive. Mud is also slippery and dangerous footing for livestock which can cause injuries. For our natural resources, bare ground leads to erosion causing not only loss of soil, but also sediment, bacteria, and other pollutants to enter nearby streams. Bare compacted soil is perfect for invasive weed species to take hold and spread, and some weed species are toxic to livestock.

Consider taking these steps to protect your livestock and your property.

FENCE OFF RIPARIAN AREAS.

If you have a wetland or stream



PHOTOS BY CLACKAMAS SWCD

Before roof/gutter improvement & heavy use area installment



PHOTOS BY CLACKAMAS SWCD

After roof/gutter improvement & heavy use area installment

on your property, fence livestock away from these sensitive zones. Limited grazing can occur near streams at the appropriate time and intensity that won't damage the vegetation. Provide livestock water off the stream channel.

INSTALL A HEAVY USE AREA (HUA) OR SACRIFICE ZONE.

Construct an HUA in the dry season to hold livestock during the wet seasons or when pastures need to rest and restore.

Heavy use areas have multi-layer construction and provide dry secure footing for your animals during mud season. When constructing an HUA, there are several considerations about size, location, and construction materials. After clearing and grading the area, a geotextile fabric is installed before layers of compacted gravel and a top surface footing material. Perimeter boards contain the base and footing materials and safe and durable fencing completes the

heavy use area.

The longevity of an HUA will depend on how well it is maintained. To reduce the amount of organic material clogging things up, don't feed on the surface and remove manure regularly. Ensure that water drainage systems direct rainwater away from the HUA and are kept in good repair.

DIRECT WATER AWAY FROM STRUCTURES AND HUAS.

Barns or shelters must be

equipped with gutters and downspouts that divert runoff away from any HUA. In addition, use water bars, culverts, or trenched drainage tiles to eliminate water flowing into high-traffic livestock gathering areas, walkways, or gate openings. Protect drainage tiles or downspouts from livestock damage. Maintain a vegetated area to capture the directed drainage water and filter nutrients and sediments from runoff.

Harden areas around high-traffic spots like water troughs, barn

doors, gates, walkways or feeding areas using the same layered HUA construction technique.

Reducing mud on your property benefits soil and water quality in Polk County. The Polk Soil and Water Conservation District can provide help with the many design considerations. Grant funding through the competitive OWEB small grant program may help reduce the cost. For more information, please contact Beth Thiel at beth.thiel@polkswcd.com or call 503-623-9680.

OSU EXTENSION TO HOST INTRODUCTORY CLASS ON FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS

By Lorelle Sherman

OSU Extension

Forestry & Natural Resources

Whether you already have a vision for your forested property or you are starting from scratch, a forest management plan is essential to communicate and formalize your goals, objectives, and actions. Management plans are designed to engage you with the responsibilities and opportunities of owning forestland. They encompass all the resources on your property – trees, roads, water sources, wildlife habitat, recreation, and any other landowner values.

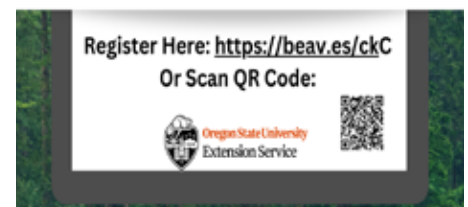
Lorelle Sherman, Extension Forester for Benton, Linn & Polk Counties, and Crystal Kelso, Education Program Assistant for Benton & Linn Counties, will be hosting an introductory course entitled “Introduction to

Forest Management Plans” with 3 online classes and an optional field day. The online classes will be held from 10am-noon on Mondays from April 8-April 22nd and the field day will be held on Friday, April 19th from 1-3pm. The class will utilize the Oregon Forest Management Planning System, a suite of guidelines, templates and supporting tools endorsed by all major natural resource agencies and key forest certification programs including the Oregon Tree Farm System.

The class is ideal for landowners who do not yet have a forest management plan for their property and those looking to learn what writing a plan entails. There is no mentorship element to this introductory course, but Sherman and Kelso are gauging interest for a more intensive forest management plan writing workshop in the future.



I deal for anyone starting a woodland management plan. Learn how to assess your site, integrate existing maps and resource data, and much more!





Soil Health



Water Quality



Forest Health



Invasive Ed.



Polk Soil & Water
Conservation District

VISION BOARD

2024



Pollinator
workshop



Working
lands tours



Wildfire
mitigation



Native
Plants

MAKE AN IMPACT!

Join the Polk SWCD Board of Directors

By Morgan Neil

Polk SWCD

Outreach Coordinator

This year marks 58 years of enhancing the quantity and quality of soil, water and wildlife habitat for the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)! We invite you to get to know us better and consider joining our Board of Directors as we grow our programming and reach in the county.

Who we are:

Across the U.S., nearly 3,000 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are engaged in their local community to wisely conserve natural resources. Conservation of farmland, protection of natural spaces, water quality, sustainable development, protection of recreational spaces, and watershed enhancements are just a few of the things that SWCD's technical assistance, education, and funding support. SWCDs are led by local people to deliver results in and around their communities.

The Polk SWCD is administered by seven locally-elected directors. The body of the board is

made up of five landowners and land managers from different county zones and two at-large directors who represent the entire county.

OUR MISSION:

To conserve and enhance the quantity and quality of soils, water, and wildlife habitat in Polk County.

OUR VISION:

To deliver education and technical assistance programs that measurably improve the soil, water, and wildlife habitat in agricultural and forest lands, and instill conservation and stewardship ethics in landowners, land managers and the public.

WE VALUE:

- Being a committed and invested partner in conservation.
- Being inclusive, equitable, and cooperative in all we do.
- Partnering with tribal nations and assisting underserved communities.
- Providing enjoyable, rewarding activities and events.

- Being innovative, using best practices, delivering climate-smart solutions, and providing long-term sustainable results.
- Good stewardship of the land, and encouraging it through voluntary, non-regulatory participation.

If our mission and vision resonate with you, please consider supporting Polk SWCD by joining our team as a Director. The next General Election is scheduled for November 5, 2024. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Natural Resources Program oversees the conservation district elections process. Directors with 2024 term dates are: Pryor Garnett (zone 1), Jock Dalton (zone 4) and Chad Woods (At-large). We are also looking for Associate Directors and Budget Committee members.

To learn more about these opportunities, the responsibilities and requirements for eligibility for directors, please visit our website at <https://www.polk-swcd.com/join-the-board.html> or contact our District Manager, Kevin Porter, at 503-623-9680 or manager@polkswcd.com.

NEW SMALL FARMS FACULTY TO ADDRESS SPECIALTY CROPS

By Mitch Lies

Cultivating Editor

Todd Anderson, the new small-farms Extension faculty for Polk, Benton and Lane counties, brings considerable experience to his position. He has worked with multiple fruit and vegetable crops in cool season climates and tropical conditions. He has worked in breeding programs and in several different production systems. And that's just scratching the surface.

Anderson, 28, who started Dec. 18, has worked in agriculture dating back to high school. His educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Agricultural and Environmental Plant Science from California Polytechnic Institute in San Luis Obispo and master's degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

For the past three-and-one-half years, Anderson has been in the Willamette Valley working on a collaborative blueberry breeding project with researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Oregon State University.

Anderson didn't grow up in agriculture, having been raised in Sacramento, but his family on his mother's side are farmers in the Philippines, and Anderson said he has always been already interested in the field.

"I've always been around agriculture," Anderson said. "My parents weren't involved in it in a formal sense, but I've always been deeply entrenched in it. I've always worked in ag since I was an adult, and even



TODD ANDERSON

before that in that I did a little bit of grape pruning when I was in high school."

Dedicating his career to agriculture seemed a natural fit, he said.

In his current position, Anderson said he looks forward to helping small farmers address production issues within the wide range of specialty crops produced in the Willamette Valley.

"I like working with different crops and seeing different cropping systems, addressing different problems and getting to know people and working with them to help them

reach their goals," Anderson said.

"I'm very excited for that," he said.

As for his approach to production issues, Anderson said he plans to be pragmatic. "I'm going to look for solutions that are reasonable," he said. "That's my main idea behind this. I don't want to go down any rabbit holes."

Anderson joins Hayley White in serving small farms in Polk County. Additionally, Audrey Comerford helps small farmers in Polk, Marion and Yamhill counties with agritourism.

POLK SWCD AWARDED GRANT FUNDING FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND OUTREACH

By Kevin Porter

Polk SWCD

District Manager

I am happy to share with you some good news! We have been awarded a NACD Technical Assistance Grant to support outreach and educational work in the district. This grant supports the vision, mission, and values set by the Polk SWCD Board of Directors for work in our community. These funds will provide us with the necessary resources to reach areas of Polk County we have not traditionally had contact with. I would like to express my appreciation to the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) for their acceptance of our proposal.

NACD's investment in our project will fund district staff, furthering our continuing beneficial assistance to Polk County residents. We have dedicated \$37,500 of funding for this project, which includes the grant and the District's match. I also want to acknowledge the hours of hard work and dedication put forth by the team here at the SWCD. We are constantly striving to leverage your tax dollars to bring in additional funding and potential benefits to the district and the people in it.



PHOTO BY MORGAN NEIL

Our scope of work is to plan, educate, and build community networks for managing small properties to uplift native habitat, build fire resistance, and provide invasive weed management. These actions will not only address needs within our community, but also pave the way for long-term sustainability and responsible land development. Our county has seen more than 16% population growth since 2010, with significant growth in areas with moderate to dense tree stands, heavy brush, and invasive weeds.

Starting this spring of 2024, we will have finalized plans for meetings, workshops and possible tours addressing the topics we've outlined. Please engage with our website, sign up for our

E-Blast, or give us a follow on social media. We use all of these platforms to relay our messages for events.

Also, Polk County residents, the SWCD needs 2-3 interested people to participate in our budget-making process. The time required is 2-4 hours in May attending our Budget Committee meeting and helping to approve our budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Some background in understanding budgeting and business financials is helpful, but not necessary. Budget Committee members generally serve 3-year terms and only need to reside in Polk County. If you are interested or have any questions, please reach out. You can reach me at 503-623-9680 or manager@polkswcd.com.



Plant Sale

Mother's Day Weekend 2024

Friday, May 10th: 9am-4pm
Saturday, May 11th: 9am-2pm
Polk County Fairgrounds

Rickreall, Oregon

www.polkmgga.org

**Perennials
Vegetables
Herbs
House Plants**

**Berries
Native Plants
Trees & Shrubs
Country Store**

**LOTS of Annual Flowers
Beautiful Hanging Baskets
\$1 Kids Craft / Kids Table**



Oregon State University Extension Service prohibits discrimination in all its programs, services, activities, and materials on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, veteran's status, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)
Accommodation requests related to a disability should be made by May 8th, 2024 to
OSU Extension Service at 503-623-8395 or ajisha.hutchinson@oregonstate.edu