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News Release

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Soil & Water Conservation Districts Earn State Recognition from NRCS

SUNRIVER, Ore., April 18, 2024 — The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Oregon presented their annual Partnership Awards to the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District and to the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District at the CONNECT+ conference held in Sunriver, Oregon from April 16-18.

The Partnership Awards recognize Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) who have excelled in helping NRCS implement Farm Bill programs and perform education and outreach related to conservation and natural resources.

The Polk SWCD is based in Dallas, Ore. And has been working with NRCS on a Regional Conservation Partnership Program for Oak Habitat Restoration since 2020. The district was instrumental in securing \$1.25 million in financial assistance to private landowners. They work with tribal partners to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into projects and measuring outcomes through supplemental agreements for bird and plant surveys before, during and after implementation.

NRCS District Conservationist, Evelyn Conrad said, “The district has assembled an army of volunteers, championing conservation and native habitat. The Polk SWCD board of directors has new members with a diversity of agricultural representation and is committed to being a leader in conservation as elected officials in their community.”

NRCS Oregon also works closely with the Grant SWCD, which is based in John Day, Ore. Grant SWCD’s focus is to build and foster relationships with the local community’s producers and continues to provide benefits and technical expertise across eastern Oregon. Some direct results include spraying 65,000 acres of annual grass in the county over the past two years while providing NRCS, partners, and interested landowner two education and outreach events.

“The district has been instrumental in putting on community outreach events such as the Grant County Natural Resource Fair, and the Southern Blues Partners Landowner/Contractors workshop,” said NRCS District Conservationist Hannah Smith.

Also recognized in the presentation of awards was Pat Holliday of Grant SWCD. Pat has worked for the district since 1995 doing a variety of jobs including reporting, accounting, payroll, and conducting audits. Holliday was recognized with the outstanding Employee Partnership award because of her dedication and efforts.

The awards were presented by Acting NRCS State Conservationist, David Rose and their respective NRCS Basin Team Leaders, Leo Preston and Nathan Adelman. The awards are presented annually with nominations from NRCS staff and selections made by NRCS state leadership.

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