



**Polk Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

**2022 - 2023  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**

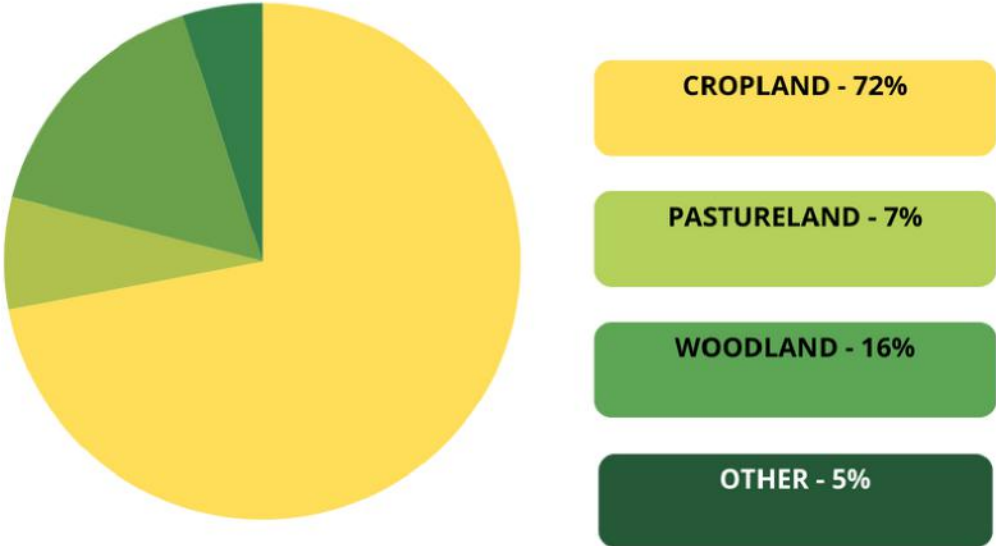
*[www.polkswcd.com](http://www.polkswcd.com) / 503-623-9680 / [info@polkswcd.com](mailto:info@polkswcd.com)*

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# POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*at a glance*

Polk County, Oregon



# POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## *our Board of Directors*

### MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The Polk Soil and Water District experienced big changes in the 2022/2023 fiscal year. In 2023, Polk County elected three new Directors; the Board elected new officers and new committee chairs.

Transitioning out of COVID times and back to in-person meetings presented its own challenges. I am pleased with the staff and board members who stuck with us through these difficult times. I am encouraged when I see the new and long-time Board members work together for the District. As the new Board Chair, I am proud of the way everyone approached changes and participated in making this year of change work, for the District, our partners and the citizens of Polk County. Polk SWCD has a diverse Board and I believe we are well-positioned for future opportunities in the county.

*Mike Wilson*

*Polk SWCD Board Chair, Zone 5*



**Mike Wilson**  
Zone 5, Chair



**Chad Woods**  
At Large, Vice Chair



**Donna Champeau**  
At Large



**Pryor Garnett**  
Zone 1, Secretary



**Lindsay McClary**  
Zone 2



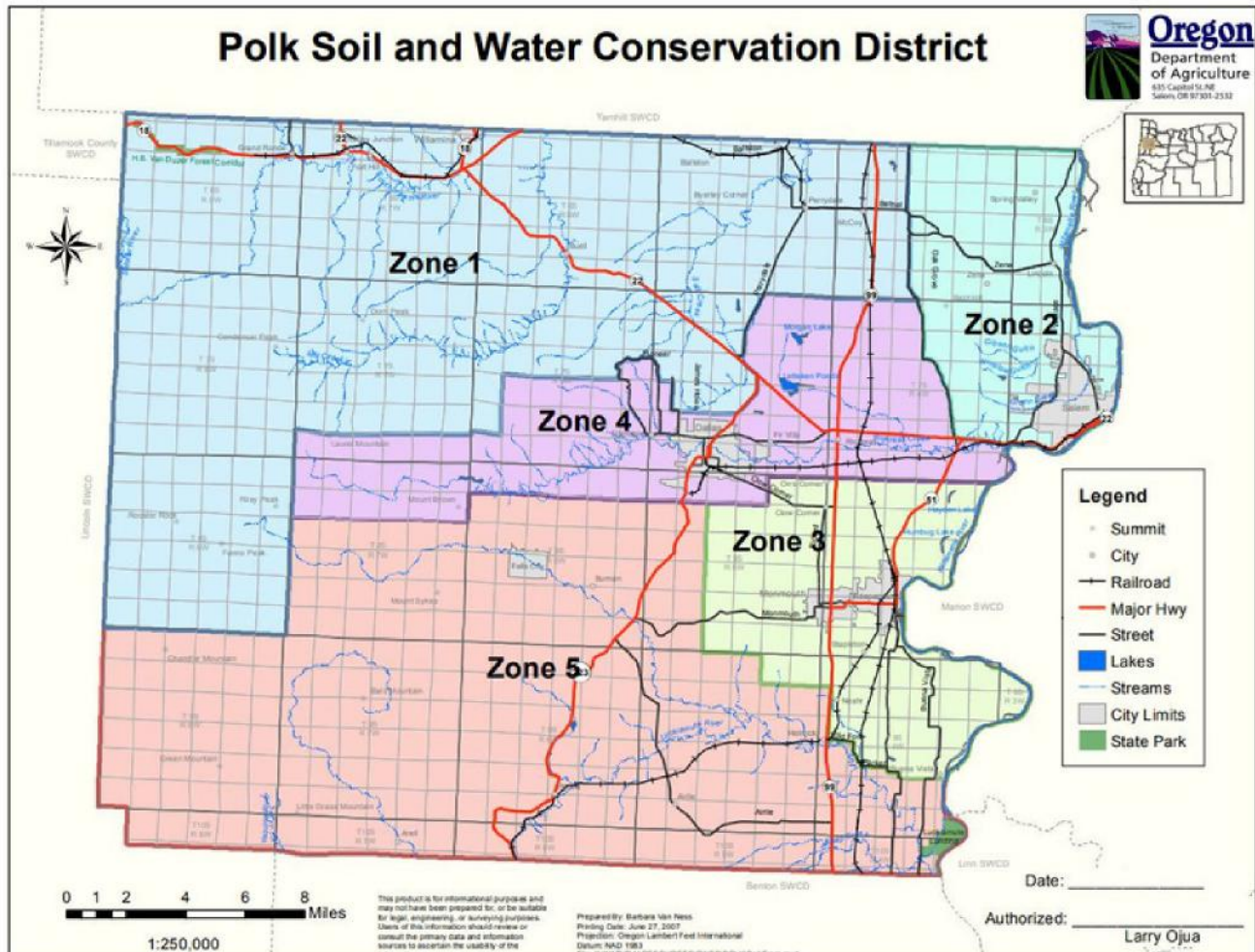
**Eden Olsen**  
Zone 3



**John "Jock" Dalton**  
Zone 4, Treasurer

# POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Polk SWCD Board is comprised of 7 members, five represent specific zones inside Polk County and two are at-large. Board members are elected in the November general election and serve 4-year terms. In January of 2023 the Board welcomed newly elected members Lindsay McClary in Zone 2 that covers West Salem, Zena, Lincoln, and Spring Valley. Eden Olsen in Zone 3 that covers the greater Monmouth-Independence area and Buena Vista. Donna Champeau was elected to At-Large position 2, and resides close to McCoy. Mike Wilson ran unopposed in Zone 5, Falls City, Bridgeport, Pedee, Arlie and Suver, and was elected to a second term on the Board. Board Directors for FY 2022 – 2023 included Chad Woods (Chair and Vice-Chair), Judy Beebe, David Simmons, Brad Ford, Pryor Garnett (Secretary), Jock Dalton (Treasurer), Mike Wilson (Chair), Lindsay McClary, Eden Olsen, and Donna Champeau.



# POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*our team*

## POLK SWCD STAFF

District staff for FY 2022-2023 included District Manager Kevin Porter, hired in November of 2022. Senior Conservation Planner Marc Bell who is in his 11th year at the district, Outreach Coordinator Morgan Neil in her second year, Administrative Assistant Hayley Iverson joined the district in February of 2022 and Conservation Planner Elizabeth (Beth) Thiel came on board in April, 2023.



**Kevin Porter**  
District Manager  
manager@polkswcd.com



**Marc Bell**  
Senior Resource Conservationist  
marc.bell@polkswcd.com



**Morgan Neil**  
Outreach Coordinator  
morgan.neil@polkswcd.com



**Beth Thiel**  
Resource Conservationist  
beth.thiel@polkswcd.com



**Hayley Iverson**  
Administrative Assistant  
clerk@polkswcd.com

# WHAT DRIVES US

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

**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.



**Over 50 landowners directly consulted with staff for technical advice or had a site visit.**

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Indigenous tribes and bands have been with the lands that we inhabit today throughout Oregon and the Northwest since time immemorial and continue to be a vibrant part of Oregon today. We would like to express our respect to the First Peoples of this land, the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon: Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Coquille Indian Tribe, Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and The Klamath Tribes.

It is important that we recognize and honor the ongoing legal and spiritual relationship between the land, plants, animals, and people indigenous to this place we now call Oregon. We also recognize the continued sovereignty of the federally recognized tribes who have ties to this place and thank them for continuing to share their knowledge and perspective on how we might care for one another and the land, and how the land can take care of us. Polk SWCD values its existing collaborations with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and commits to continuing to engage in respectful and successful partnerships as stewards of these lands.

*Land acknowledgement adopted by the Polk SWCD Board of Directors on April 12, 2023*



# SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

## OAK RESTORATION



The District continues to partner with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This program gives native oak woodlands and grasslands a better chance by addressing critical issues facing habitat restoration and expansion.

The RCPP is open to qualifying Polk County residents with oak woodlands. A staggering 98% of the remaining oaks are on private land, which gives landowners the opportunity to take an active role in the preservation of these majestic trees for future generations.



Staff worked on 5 applications for White Oak restoration in FY 2022-2023



\$900,000 contracted for oak restoration under RCPP



436 acres restored





# SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

## SALT CREEK WATER QUALITY MONITORING



Oregon's farmers and ranchers are stewards of land and water and play a key role in protecting the state's natural resources for current and future generations. Every area across the state of Oregon is included in an Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan overseen by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. These plans, created by Local Advisory Committees, aim to prevent water pollution from agricultural activities through a combination of educational programs, monitoring, and management activities.

Polk SWCD is maintaining a focus on the water quality of Salt Creek to develop a solid baseline of conditions. In partnership with OSU, we will continue gathering and addressing concerns of the stakeholders in the Salt Creek basin while sustaining the monthly monitoring visits to collect data on a variety of parameters including water temperatures, total suspended solids, nitrates, phosphates, dissolved oxygen, and pH. In the spring of 2024, we will share analysis of data collected during 2021-23 with the landowners in the Salt Creek basin.



# SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

## CULTURAL BURN *at* SMITHFIELD OAKS



On June 29, 2023, members of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde led a cultural burn at our property, Smithfield Oaks. This event was both a training opportunity for Tribal youth interns participating in the Traditional Ecological Inquiry Program (TEIP), and also an opportunity to re-ignite the relationship between these oaks and fire, and the Tribes who have stewarded this land with seasonal burns since time immemorial. The subsequent video project takes you on a journey on how and why cultural burning is used as a land management tool by the Tribes throughout the Willamette Valley, and shows you what this experience was like on June 29, 2023 at Smithfield Oaks. The video can be viewed at:

<https://www.polkswcd.com/tek.html>.

Thank you to the following groups and organizations that were involved in the cooperation and coordination of this cultural burn:

- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Traditional Ecological Inquiry Program
- The Wagon Burners (formerly a part of Ecostudies Institute)
- Luckiamute Watershed Council
- Oregon State University Extension Service Fire Program
- Southwest Polk Fire District



# OUR IMPACT

1105

PEOPLE



made contact with Polk SWCD through events and site visits

27

EVENTS



we participated in or organized to connect with land stewards

97

VOLUNTEERS



gave their time to support local conservation efforts

355

VOLUNTEER HOURS



at plant sales, native plantings and litter clean up

6625

PLANTS, TREES & SHRUBS



were added to the landscape through plant sales and volunteering

317

POLLINATOR SEED PACKETS



were given out for free at events and farmers markets

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



- 10,512 website views
- 32,459 people reached on Facebook
- 22,400 *Cultivating* newsletters published
- 27,423 impressions on Nextdoor
- 750 postcards mailed about programming & events
- 867 views on our YouTube channel
- 23 E-newsletters sent

## Polk County Local Work Group Meeting

In partnership with NRCS, we hosted the 2023 Local Work Group meeting. Participants were able to attend in person at the Chemeketa Eola Northwest Wine Studies Center or via zoom. The meeting was recorded and posted to our YouTube channel for those that could not attend. Presentations reviewed current priorities, including: soil health and water quality principles, forest resiliency in the face of climate change, oak restoration for wildlife and current funding opportunities.

The Mid-Willamette Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) is a partnership of organizations, agencies, and non-profits dedicated to combating invasive weeds across the region. It exists to connect and educate land managers, increase awareness in the public, and support collaborative weed management efforts. Polk SWCD staff are active on the CWMA steering committee to support and promote invasive plant education, community outreach, weed inventory, data management, and weed prevention and control activities.

The goal of the Mid-Willamette CWMA is to prevent the introduction and control the spread of harmful invasive plants in the region by increasing public awareness, educating land managers, and facilitating cooperative management between organizations. The Mid-Willamette CWMA includes 2,657 square miles of land delineated on a map by Yamhill, Marion, and Polk counties.



**MID-WILLAMETTE**  
COOPERATIVE WEED  
MANAGEMENT AREA

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Intern - WOU Upward Bound TRIO program

Polk SWCD hosted an intern the summer of 2023 through the TRIO program at Western Oregon University. Upward Bound is a college program where students prepare by getting the college experience. Our intern helped with outreach projects, office organizing and shadowed staff to learn about careers in natural resources.



Conservation Spotlight is a regular segment of Willamette Wake up on KMUZ community radio 88.5 & 100.7 FM and streaming at kmuz.org. This is where Polk & Marion SWCD's and OSU Small Farms program shine a light on partnerships and programs that conserve our beautiful natural resources in the Willamette Valley. We are illuminating our collective mission of conserving soil, water, and natural resources for urban and agricultural audiences in the Willamette Valley. We discuss topics that are relevant for farmers, land managers, and anyone interested in conservation! Listen live by joining us every third Wednesday of the month at 8am or stream anytime through our website - <https://www.polkswcd.com/conservation-spotlight-podcast>

## Native Plant Sales

Our 2022-2023 Native Plant sales saw big changes. We moved the venue from the Polk SWCD office parking lot to venues that could accommodate more plants and people. The fall '22 sale was held at the Delbert Hunter Arboretum in Dallas and the winter '23 sale was held at a landowner's barn in West Salem.

We reconnected with the community, bringing in many volunteers to tag, organize and prepare pre-orders. The fall sale incorporated Tree Tours at the Arboretum, led by their volunteers.

**Our 22/23 season saw a 82% increase in sales.**



# WHAT'S COMING

Polk SWCD has acquired grant funding for a Community Forestry Program from a successful application to the NACD Outreach and Technical Assistance grant fund. Polk SWCD submitted a request for funding to pay for staff time and community outreach as we develop a rural and urban/suburban forestry program. We have \$37,500 in funding, including our in-kind match.

Starting in early 2024, the District will start to engage landowners and develop the scope of this program with their input. The base plan is to bring smaller property tract owners together to form communities of discussion around managing those properties with a focus on fire resistance and native restoration. The target areas include acreage that may be mostly or partially unsuitable for agricultural use and have fir and/or hardwood treescapes that need management or maintenance. By combining those landowners into larger blocks of land, the District can facilitate contractors to do cost-effective work at scale.

