

Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District



Annual Report
2010 – 2011



TABLE OF CONTENTS

New Building	2 & 3
Who We are	4
Board of Directors	4
Meet the Staff	5
Financial Report	6
Letter from LDS	6
Weeds	6
Projects & Outreach	7
SBWC Report	8 & 9
UNWC Report	9 & 10
LCRWC Report	10 & 11
Out & About	12

Columbia SWCD
2514 Sykes Road
St. Helens, OR 97051
503.397.4555

We're on the move!

2010-2011 was the beginning of a new chapter for the Columbia SWCD. The cramped quarters of 2514 Sykes Road made for cozy board meetings, shoulder to shoulder project meetings, limited parking, people sharing desks from time to time, and no room for the large number of filing cabinets that had accumulated over the past 65 years. It was time to find a space that would not only house the current staff and partners, but also allow room for growth, provide better meeting space for not only board meetings, and planning sessions, but a meeting space for workshops, trainings, that could also potentially be used by the public, and if possible some outdoor space to demonstrate some of the practices we encourage landowners to adopt on their property.

The search was on. In the spring of 2010 we began working with a local architect who took our needs and wants lists and match them up with the properties we had found for sale in the area. The pros and cons were scrutinized on all of the properties; although fun it proved very frustrating at times. The more we looked the more it was beginning to look like there were no real options for us that would remain in a reasonable budget. We did not give up, but the pickings were slim. Driving around one day on a field visit with our NRCS District Conservationist, we drove past the Warren Grange; about a mile and half from our current office, a block off of Hwy 30, and a decent sized lot surrounding it. The most intriguing part of this property was the for sale sign on the road out front.

Now this was not a beautiful building, it was a typical grange hall, formerly a school house, over 100 years in age, and painted a lovely color of pale mint green that is typical of a grange. The first walk through proved to be promising. The 4500 sq ft was a far cry from the 1200 sq ft we were in now, and the two floors were basically big open spaces, an empty palette. The Architect did a mock up of what might work for the space; all of our needs and a few of our wants fit perfectly. The lot was a full acre and would provide ample parking with space to build a second building that would serve as a garage, shop, and storage building. This was the first building that interested everyone; the staff, our partners, the community, and the board. A decision was made in the fall of 2010 to purchase the building and begin working on the plans to remodel it into the new home of the Columbia SWCD.

The planning continued through the 2010-2011 fiscal year, we acquired a loan to complete the remodel, and in July of 2011 the bid process concluded, contracts were written, and the remodel began. And that is a story for next year...

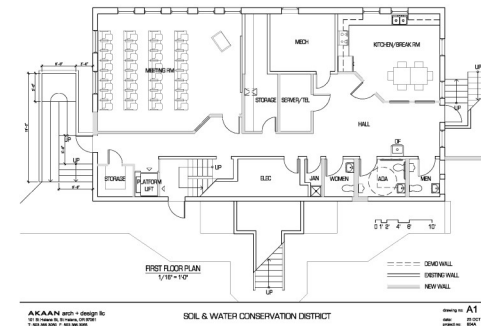
We will have a sneak peek of the new offices in February 2012, with an open house scheduled for summer of 2012. We will post information on our website soon.



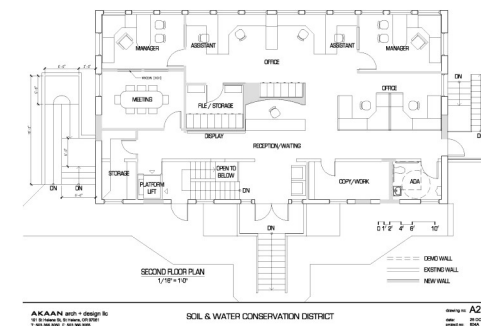
Before



Before



New Floor plan downstairs



New Floor plan upstairs



During Demolition



During Demolition

Who We Are and What We Do

The Columbia SWCD was created in 1946 and has been serving the citizens of Columbia County ever since!

Conservation Planning:

With the assistance of the NRCS, we can create a Conservation Plan for your property. These plans help conserve your natural resources while helping to maintain and improve productivity.

Weeds:

The Columbia SWCD is the county leader for weed control. We have numerous partners who assist us and are always happy to talk weeds with anyone!

Outreach and Education:

Whether it's talking to landowners or school kids, we are always striving to spread the work of

conservation. If you'd like us to speak to your group, JUST ASK!

Technical Assistance:

The SWCD and it's board members have been at this for a long time! If you have a question, feel free to ask. If we don't know the answer, we have an extensive network of experts that can.

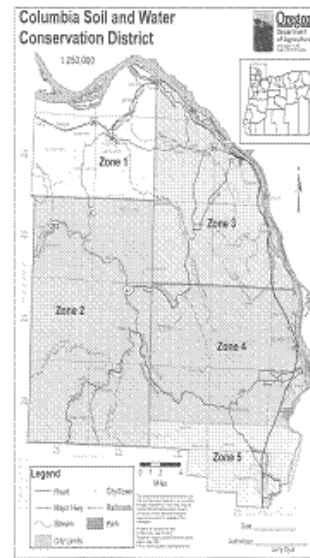
Board of Directors

The Columbia SWCD Board of Directors is made up of citizens and landowners of Columbia County. The county is broken up into 5 zones of which there are representatives for each.

There is a requirement that the director must own at least 10 acres of land to qualify.

In addition, the Board has 2 "at large" positions. These can come from anywhere in the county and there is NO land requirement. Directors serve four year terms and are elected just like any other government official.

The Board of Directors meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM in our office.



- Zone 1**
Randy Bergman - Chair
- Zone 2**
Jason Busch - Vice Chair
- Zone 3**
Kay C. VanNatta - Treasurer
- Zone 4**
Dave Freytag - Director
- Zone 5**
Vacant
- At Large 1**
Bill Eagle - Secretary
- At Large 2**
Lona Pierce - Director

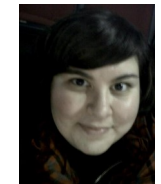
Meet the Staff



Kari Hollander , District Manager, lives in Rainier, and has been with the district for over 5 years. No two days are the same at the district office and that is what makes it enjoyable for her. The landowners are wonderful to work with and the staff (District and NRCS) make a great team. Outside of the office she mentors young women; encouraging them to pursue their dreams, one on one and at conferences.



Tyler Joki, Resource Conservationist, has been with the District since August of 2009. He has a BS and MS in Biology from Portland State University and a Graduate Certificate in River Restoration. Tyler handles the Technical Assistance aspects of the District's mission, as well as project coordination and landowner outreach. Tyler has served in both the Marine Corps and Coast Guard and is a die-hard Portland Trail Blazers fan.



Malysa Page, Office Assistant, has been with the District since April of 2009. A life long resident of Columbia County she is excited to be helping the members of her community to improve their land. Malysa handles the day to day operations in the office and enjoys doing education and outreach events. When not working, Malysa enjoys cooking, baking, reading and watching lots and lots of sports.



Don Mehlhoff, District Conservationist for NRCS, has over 28 years with NRCS. He began working for the agency in North Dakota followed by several years in eastern Washington, northern Idaho and now Oregon. He has been a certified crop advisor since 1997 and is certified as a journeyman conservation planner with Oregon NRCS since 2000. Don and his family have resided in St. Helens since 2000 when he accepted the NRCS position here. "My favorite thing about working for NRCS is the opportunity to work with farmers, ranchers and forest operators. The chance to visit their farms, discuss their operations and their interest in conservation makes the job rewarding. I have typically learned more from them than I have probably provided in return."



Bill Bennett is employed by the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership to help with the identification, design, and planning of habitat restoration projects in collaboration with the Scappoose Bay and the Lower Columbia River Watershed Councils. Bill works with the District to help find and write grants to get these projects accomplished.



Dan McLain lives in Columbia county and has worked for the Conservation District for several years. He has done outreach with the local schools in the past and currently is the district's certified weed control technician. Each Spring he also teaches workshops at Hudson Park Elementary's outdoor school.

Financial Report

The annual audit will be available after 12/30/11 for review. Please contact Kari Hollander, 503-397-4555 x. 102 or kari.hollander@columbiaswcd.com if you would like a copy.

A Letter from Land Development Services

The Columbia County Soil & Water Conservation District is a valuable resource for Land Development Services to utilize because the SWCD is an agency that is not "regulatory-driven", but "assistance-driven". The assistance that the SWCD provides to property owners enables them to achieve their goals for their property in an appropriate, compliant fashion. LDS Planning Staff regularly refers the public to the SWCD when they are looking to or are required to better manage the natural resources on their properties in ways that will protect and preserve their property's natural characteristics and environmentally sensitive areas.

A few examples describing occasions when LDS has referred the public to the SWCD include the following:

- A neighbor's poor management of stormwater runoff that causes drainage problems on adjacent properties.
- Improving and managing the vegetation within protected riparian corridors that provides healthy areas for fish and wildlife and property owners.
- Improving the property's existing wetland areas and/or providing new wetlands areas onsite.
- Thinning and/or removing vegetation within the forest dwelling's primary and secondary firebreak areas in ways that simultaneously preserve wildlife habitat and reduce fire hazards.
- Providing natural buffers from unsightly land uses occurring on nearby properties.
- Ways of installing green infrastructure instead of traditional gray infrastructure to reduce the site's amount of impervious areas.

Land Development Services considers the SWCD's technical assistance, educational outreach, and conservation services as vital, integral, and irreplaceable pieces of the land use puzzle that are available for all residents of Columbia County. Through our partner agency cooperation, and a comprehensive approach to community planning, we can better ensure that all relevant areas are considered when making future decisions for how we better fit in with existing environments.

Weeds

This year we have continued our program of battling invasive weeds in our county. We've treated Knotweed and Garlic Mustard over 30 miles in the Scappoose and Tide watersheds, and Purple Loosestrife and Yellow-flag Iris in the Clatskanie area and along the Columbia River. In total we treated over 500 acres of noxious and invasive weeds across Columbia County.

Building on our partnerships with our local Watershed Councils and OSU Extension has also been critical to our success. From the knowledge and guidance of our local Extension agent, to the assistance with implementation from our Watershed Councils, we have strengthened our partnerships across Columbia County.

Over this next year we will continue to target the areas where we have had success and try to find new and innovative funding strategies to continue our weed program. 2012 looks to be a challenging year as many of the federal and state grants we have relied on for this funding are changing or disappearing.

Projects & Outreach

Practices completed by Columbia SWCD: FY 10-11:

By working with various local partners (NRCS, Watershed Councils) the Columbia SWCD implemented the following conservation projects and practices.

- 6 acres of Heavy Use Protection installed,
- 5500 feet of instream habitat improvements,
- 14 acres of channel re-vegetation,
- 34 acres of wetland/habitat management and restoration,
- 131 acres of upland wildlife habitat management,
- 59 acres of exclusion,
- 421 acres prescribed grazing,
- 5 Forest management plans and 145 acres of Forest stand improvement,
- 500+ acres of weed management,
- 2 bioswales to filter agricultural runoff,
- 3 Roof Runoff structures to manage runoff and reduce impacts,
- 3 Rain Gardens to infiltrate roof runoff and recharge groundwater.

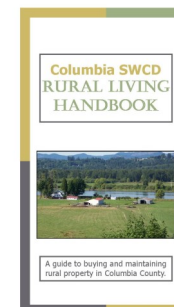
Outreach:

Columbia SWCD conducted the following outreach and education activities:

- 73 Landowners provided with Technical Assistance
- 40 Assistance Visits leading to 18 Projects Planned
- 159 landowners attended various workshops, presentations, and Creek School classes including topics such as:
 - Agricultural Water Quality,
 - Conservation Planning and available programs,
 - Forest Health,
 - Invasive species management,
 - Rain Collection and Rain Gardens,
 - Mud and manure management,
 - Water quality/quantity issues.
- 120 students in local K-12 public schools were presented information on topics of water quality, forestry, soils, and watershed health,
- Local civic groups (Kiwanis and Garden Clubs) in the county were presented information about what the district offers the community,
- 3,190 Landowners contacted through targeted outreach mailings and site visits,
- 1550 brochures and information packets were passed out to local residents at local events such as the Clatskanie Health and Safety Fair, or mailed as part of target outreach,
- 6 Tours were conducted highlighting the Districts Projects and local issues,
- 790 Newsletters were distributed to District Cooperators, interested residents, and various partners highlighting the work of the District.

The Columbia County Rural Living Handbook:

1035 Handbooks were distributed to Columbia County Residents through local real estate agents to new landowners, through the Columbia County Planning Department for new construction or land use changes, and during District outreach events and a New Revised Version was produced



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Scappoose Bay Watershed Council



57420-2 Old Portland Road
Warren, OR 97053
Phone: 503-397-7904
www.scappoosebay-wc.org

2011 has been a busy year for the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council. We implemented two in-stream habitat enhancement projects and placed additional logs on a third; conducted another year of invasive weed treatment; completed a three-year monitoring report and collected additional macroinvertebrate data; worked with partners to conduct an amphibian and reptile survey; continued our native plant nursery program; and facilitated Creek School classes on a variety of topics. We owe many thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers, and some great community partners such as the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District and teachers and students from the St. Helens School District. We are currently in the process of gathering information for our 2012 State of the Watershed Report and are excited to pull this report together next year.

Project Highlights

North and South Scappoose Creek Confluence Restoration: The Confluence Project, located near the confluence of North and South Scappoose Creeks, was identified during development of the South Scappoose Restoration Plan. This area was ranked as one of the top priorities for habitat enhancement and restoration efforts. The project involved pulling back an eroding bank, installing large wood to provide fish habitat and encourage the creek to utilize an existing network of side channels during high water. The site will be planted with a variety of native trees and shrubs.

Cox Creek Fish Barrier Correction: A juvenile coho survey conducted in 2008 indicated that Cox Creek is a particularly important tributary. By replacing an undersized culvert on Cox Creek, we made an additional 1 mile accessible to salmonids including Coho, winter steelhead, and cutthroat trout. The existing 4.6 foot wide culvert was replaced with a 13 foot wide bottomless-arch culvert to allow complete passage by juvenile and adult salmonids. Since 2001, we have opened up 56 miles of salmon habitat.



Cox Creek Culvert Before



Cox Creek Culvert After

Creek School: The council partnered with the Columbia SWCD to offer a series of courses for residents that want to know more about their local environment and what they can do to be better stewards of the watershed. Creek School included classes on topics such as living with wildlife, becoming salmon wise, setting up rain gardens and bio-swales, and managing invasive species.

Scappoose Bay Watershed Council

Native Plant Nursery and Annual Plant Distribution: For the last eight years, the watershed council has provided native trees and shrubs to landowners who want to improve creeks or wetlands on their property. The Council works with landowners to figure out what the most appropriate species are for a particular area. The Council has developed native plant nurseries at two local high schools to provide plants for landowners and restoration projects. The native plant nursery program also provides hands-on experience to volunteers and students.

Water Quality Monitoring Report: In June, the council completed a report that summarizes water quality monitoring data collected in the Scappoose Bay Watershed during the years of 2008 through 2010. The SBWC volunteer water quality monitoring program was designed to establish baseline water quality data for the high valued salmonid habitat (refugia) within the Scappoose Bay watershed and identify areas of concern, as well as involve and educate members of the community in the monitoring process and provide hands-on experience in the field. In order to get a full picture of watershed conditions, 27 monitoring sites were set up throughout the watershed and monitored for three years.

Macroinvertebrate Monitoring: The council partnered with the Columbia SWCD to continue to monitor macroinvertebrates at eight sites around the watershed. The kinds of macroinvertebrates that live in a creek are a good indicator of the health of the creek. We also partnered with local teachers to train St. Helens high school students to collect macro samples.

Turtle and Amphibian Surveys: Partnering with the watershed council and local landowners, the Northwest Ecological Research Institute (NERI) conducting surveys in 2011 in the Scappoose Bay Watershed for reptile and amphibian species, several of which are declining in Oregon due to a number of factors. This was the first herpetological survey in the watershed to collect information on species presence and habitat use on public and privately owned lands. This knowledge will assist the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council in our efforts to assess watershed health and conduct restoration activities.



NW Salamander



Western Painted Turtles

Upper Nehalem Watershed Council



919 Bridge Street
Vernonia, OR 97064
Phone: 503-429-2401
www.unwc.nehalem.org

Over the last year the UNWC continued to work in partnership with landowners, stakeholders, local government and natural resource agencies concerned to promote watershed health and native salmon recovery through direct involvement in improving salmon passage, habitat and streamside reforests. We continue to seek a greater understanding of the watershed resource through water quality monitoring, assessment and geographic information system analysis.

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Upper Nehalem Watershed Council

In the fall of 2011 we completed the 3rd year of rapid bio-assessment of juvenile salmon presence in over 200 miles of salmon bearing streams in the upper Nehalem. Also completed this year was a limiting factors analysis of the Rock Creek watershed. Both of these assessment projects helped us to identify and refine our restoration priorities enabling us to design projects with the greatest potential for ecological benefit for the least cost.

We are currently knee deep in the tree planting season and are enjoying seeing the Coho return to areas we have restored to spawn, seek refuge and rear. Our Northern Oregon Restoration Partnership – native plant nursery coop (14 years in the making) is thriving and we are looking forward to working with staff and students of the Vernonia School District to build a native plant nursery on the new school grounds. Our plan is to build a native plant nursery that can supply our reforestation plant needs and function as a living classroom for forestry and ecology minded students for many years in the future. The partnership with the Vernonia School district is blossoming in many other wonderful ways – including supporting the development of the forestry class/ curriculum, natural resource education day, salmon watch and adopt a stream.

The UNWC Executive Board has been very active over the last year revising policies, procedures, job descriptions, overseeing an organizational audit, supporting staff development and conducting the annual meeting. Currently the board is laying the ground work for updating the UNWC strategic plan that will involve reaching out and involving the watershed community by broadening and strengthening the network of supporters to assure continued success. The upcoming year looks bright for UNWC and we are truly grateful for all the support we have received from the community and all our partners.

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Lower Columbia River Watershed Council



12589 Hwy 30
Clatskanie, OR 97016
Phone: 503-728-9015
www.lcrwc.com

The Lower Columbia River Watershed Council 2011 activities touched on many facets of watershed health from water quantity and quality to fish passage and wetland restoration and involved the Council in the development of new relationships, partnerships and outreach efforts.

Utilizing data from our 2010 Habitat Survey we were able to identify project sites for large wood placement and received funding for a 2011 implementation of a large wood project on the upper Clatskanie River. Bringing funders together to agree upon the mechanics of large wood placement was the biggest challenge we faced to make this project a reality. Each agency and funder has a different view of the methods to employ in project implementation, but with patience and exchange of ideas the Council was able, with the assistance of the Columbia SWCD and Restoration Project Coordinator Bill Bennett, to achieve consensus on an acceptable approach for the site. The success of this initial project on the Clatskanie River will be an impetus to future large wood projects on private landholdings on the Clatskanie.

Lower Columbia River Watershed Council

Merrill Creek was a site where not only erosion control and fish habitat and riparian restoration projects were implemented but an area that continues to need the attention of our trusty "weed patrol" led by Dan McClain. The replacement of rootwads, boulders and soil lifts along with riparian planting will control erosion along several thousand feet of stream. Herbicide treatment of extensive knotweed invasion along the banks of Merrill Creek continues with the beaver having a significant role in the spread of knotweed as they use the stalks in their dams and allow plant starts to make downstream progress.

Invasive weed control throughout the watershed continues to be a focus to improve watershed health. Purple Loosestrife, Yellow Flag Iris and Knotweed Complex still rank at the top of the target weed list. New populations are found every year but effective treatment of identified sites continues to be successful in controlling unchecked growth.



Fish Counting on Merrill Creek



Steve Anderson assisting with weed control

We were happy to be able to work with the Clatskanie PUD as it built a new facility. The LCRWC and SWCD provided guidance on rain water management systems that led to the installation of a rain garden on site and other measures the potential for stormwater to enter the Clatskanie River. We applaud the PUD for including these practices in their project.

Restoration of wetland functions along the Columbia River is a priority for salmon recovery. Proposed projects on Carr Slough, Westport Slough and Plympton Creek all have the potential to meet this goal. Grants have been secured for technical assistance to develop projects on Carr and Westport Sloughs.

Outreach is an integral part of our Council activities. This year, in cooperation with Columbia SWCD, we participated in the Legislative Outreach Day and shared our accomplishments with our state legislators. We were also involved in the Network of Oregon Watersheds promotion project telling the story of our successful Emergency Watershed Protection projects and the importance of solid partnerships in getting conservation on the ground.

The LCRWC looks forward to continuing to work with landowners and land managers, the Columbia and Clatsop SWCD's, USDA NRCS and others to build partnerships and to successfully develop and implement effective projects and to help citizens preserve a healthy watershed.



Out and About



With the SWCD