

COLUMBIA SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2018  

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2019

ANNUAL REPORT



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Finances .....	3
Board of Directors .....	4
Current Staff .....	5
SBWC Report .....	6
LCRWC Report .....	7
NRCS Report .....	8,9
Dribble Creek .....	10,11
Weed All About It .....	12,13
Fishhawk Creek .....	14

## OUR MISSION

*Offering People of our Community Assistance to Sustain  
Local Natural Resources*

## WHO WE ARE

The Columbia SWCD was created in 1946 and has been serving the citizens of Columbia County ever since. The SWCDs of Oregon were created gradually starting in 1939. To date, there are 45 districts serving Oregon. They are considered subdivisions of state government, but function as local units led by a locally elected board of directors. District directors are elected on Oregon’s general election ballot and serve terms of four years without pay. Directors are members of business, professional and agricultural communities who understand the ecological relationships of soil, water, plant, and animals.

follow us:

@ColumbiaSWCD



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

BALANCE SHEET		RESOURCES 2018-2019																																					
<b>COLUMBIA SWCD</b> <b>Summary Balance Sheet</b> As of June 30, 2019																																							
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<p><i>* Audit available for review at the District office after 12-31-19</i></p>		<p> <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Tax Levy \$0.10/\$1,000                                <span style="color: teal;">■</span> Grants                                <span style="color: purple;">■</span> Other                         </p>																																					

## WHAT ARE YOUR TAX DOLLARS DOING FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY?

- Increased capacity to address client inquiries, develop projects, and provide technical assistance
- Development of noxious weeds and education programs
- Ability to develop comprehensive restoration plans and partnerships

## GET INVOLVED:

- If you are interested in issues involving restoration, land management, and conservation, consider running for one of our Board positions. More information is available on our website: [www.columbiaswcd.com](http://www.columbiaswcd.com)
- Volunteer or be an Associate Director. Whether you have a special skill set to offer, are studying to go into the field of natural resources, or are just generally looking to help out, volunteers are always greatly appreciated.
- Implement conservation practices on your land. Call our office or the NRCS to get more information about what you can do to improve soil health, water quality, and habitat on your land.
- Start a community work group. Identify common interests or concerns among friends/neighbors and rally for the cause. Check out SOLVE’s website for volunteer opportunities across the state and to learn how to become an Event Coordinator.

# CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEET THE 3RD WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT 7:00 PM IN THE COLUMBIA SWCD MEETING ROOM:  
35285 MILLARD ROAD, ST. HELENS, OR 97051



*Randy Bergman*  
VICE-CHAIR ZONE 1



*Craig Ellis*  
DIRECTOR ZONE 5



*Jason Busch*  
CHAIR ZONE 2



*Bill Eagle*  
SECRETARY AT LARGE 1



*Jeff VanNatta*  
TREASURER ZONE 3



*Debi Brimacombe*  
DIRECTOR AT LARGE 2



*Dave Freytag*  
DIRECTOR ZONE 4

For your years of dedicated service to the Board of Directors

*thank you!*

Lona Pierce & Kay C. VanNatta



## ABOUT OUR BOARD

The Columbia SWCD Board of Directors is made up of citizens and landowners of Columbia County. The county is broken up into five zones, of which there are representatives for each. The director must own at least 10 acres of land to qualify.

In addition, the Board has two “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 governmental official.

# CURRENT STAFF

THE COLUMBIA SWCD STAFF CAN ALL BE REACHED AT (503) 433-3205, OR BY EMAILING [INFORMATION@COLUMBIASWCD.COM](mailto:INFORMATION@COLUMBIASWCD.COM).



*Nathan Herr*

INTERIM DISTRICT MANAGER  
[nathan.herr@columbiaswcd.com](mailto:nathan.herr@columbiaswcd.com)



*Malysa Legg*

FINANCIAL MANAGER  
[malysa.legg@columbiaswcd.com](mailto:malysa.legg@columbiaswcd.com)



*Selene Keeney*

RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST  
[selene.keeney@columbiaswcd.com](mailto:selene.keeney@columbiaswcd.com)



*Jennifer Steinke*

OFFICE & OUTREACH COORDINATOR  
[jennifer.steinke@columbiaswcd.com](mailto:jennifer.steinke@columbiaswcd.com)



*Crystalyn Bush*

RIPARIAN SPECIALIST  
[crystalyn.bush@columbiaswcd.com](mailto:crystalyn.bush@columbiaswcd.com)

## OUR SERVICES

- Community Outreach & Presentations
- Conservation Planning
- Erosion issues
- Fish & Wildlife habitat assistance
- Mud & Manure Management
- Native Plantings
- Noxious Weeds
- Pasture Management
- Permitting assistance
- Project Implementation
- Rain gardens
- Rainwater Harvesting
- Site Visits
- Small Market Gardens
- Soil information
- Stormwater Management
- Water Quality

## NRCS STAFF:

THE COLUMBIA SWCD SHARES AN OFFICE WITH THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS), AN AGENCY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S (USDA) THAT PROVIDES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS AND OTHER PRIVATE LANDOWNERS AND MANAGERS.



*Don Mehlhoff*

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST  
(503) 438-3146  
[don.mehlhoff@or.usda.gov](mailto:don.mehlhoff@or.usda.gov)



*Dee Robinson*

PROGRAM SUPPORT TECH  
(503) 438-3147  
[dee.robinson@or.usda.gov](mailto:dee.robinson@or.usda.gov)

# SBWC ANNUAL REPORT

*Pat Welle*

SCAPPOOSE BAY WATERSHED COUNCIL COORDINATOR

(503) 397-7904 • [pat@scappoosebay-wc.org](mailto:pat@scappoosebay-wc.org) • [www.scappoosebay-wc.org](http://www.scappoosebay-wc.org)



The SBWC had another very busy year with completion of several construction projects, new designs for future projects, and more growth in our native plant nursery.

Our most visible effort was the South Scappoose Creek restoration along Veteran's Park and a section of private land south of JP West Rd in the City of Scappoose. The construction portion was completed last September, with native vegetation planting during fall and winter. Just days after planting 3000 native plants along the riparian border of the creek, the heavy rains of February caused the creek to rise beyond its banks, submerging large portions of the park and most of the vegetation. The improvements, both bank laybacks and the addition of floodplain benches, helped to spread out the water and slow the rise. Fortunately, the majority of the plants fared well through the flooding.

We also completed native vegetation planting along the 2.5 miles of upper Milton Creek where we had installed over 350 pieces of large wood. The project will improve stream function by retaining and sorting gravels, creating pools and providing future, long-term wood recruitment.

Currently, we are implementing a large wood project along North Scappoose Creek to address key limiting factors for salmonids. This restoration provides additional fish and wildlife habitat along a quarter of mile section of the creek, and included installing several large wood structures within the stream bank, excavating a short section of stream layback, and will have a significant amount of native riparian

vegetation planted this coming winter.

Finally, we are also having designs for the restoration of an additional section of South Scappoose Creek (Reach F) completed. When constructed, this will extend the restoration work previously done at Veteran's Park in Scappoose, downstream another quarter mile. Additional designs for restoration efforts in Milton Creek are underway.

We have 4 small grants in progress currently – 3 nearing completion and a 4<sup>th</sup> just beginning. All work with small landowners to reduce invasive species and improve native vegetation along stream corridors.

The Native Plant Nursery continues to be an excellent resource for the Council by providing many plants, as well as sourcing others from local nurseries, to use in our large riparian restoration projects. Twice a year, the Native Plant Nursery offers plants for sale to the public. The sales are held on the second Saturdays of April and October. This year, our spring plant sale was our best on record. We are very grateful for the support of our amazing volunteers and customers! It's also a great resource for local landowners, who are able to collaborate with us on local small to medium riparian plantings along streams in our watershed. We recently created a new guide for landowners to provide do-it-yourself ideas and information on how to work with the SBWC on potential local riparian restorations. You can find this Information on our website listed below.

We continue to make valuable connections with the local community through events such as the OSU Master Gardener's Spring Fair, biannual clean-up days at Nob Hill Nature Park, and this year's Sauvie Island Jubilee in late September.

Additional projects we are working on include future restoration activities at Fisher Park along Scappoose Creek, and an additional large wood and culvert repair project along Brush Creek, a tributary of North Scappoose Creek.

More information on all our projects and the nursery can be found on our website at: <http://www.scappoosebay-wc.org>



South Scappoose Creek Restoration – Planting begins with help from LCEP and Otto Petersen elementary school students (10/23/18). Photo by Pat Welle

# LCRWC ANNUAL REPORT

*Allan Whiting*

LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL COORDINATOR  
(503) 789-9340 • allan@whitingenv.com • [www.lowercolumbiariver.org](http://www.lowercolumbiariver.org)



LCRWC is excited to wrap up a year of strategic action planning (SAP) that incorporates the latest science and understanding of our watershed. This will provide a clear roadmap to developing high value restoration projects in the various creeks in our large watershed while meeting the unique needs of the local community. It provides focus to our flagship salmon-bearing watershed such as the Clatskanie River while highlighting smaller yet important drainages to the Lower Columbia system. The SAP also summarizes climate change predictions and while providing guidelines useful for future resiliency planning with our community partners. More importantly, the SAP provides a sound, science-based approach for new funding proposals for new projects and justification for new investigations to address key uncertainties in watershed condition changes over time. Finally, the plan anticipates demographic changes to the rural character of Columbia County as

our cities grow larger and rural economies adapt to global conditions.

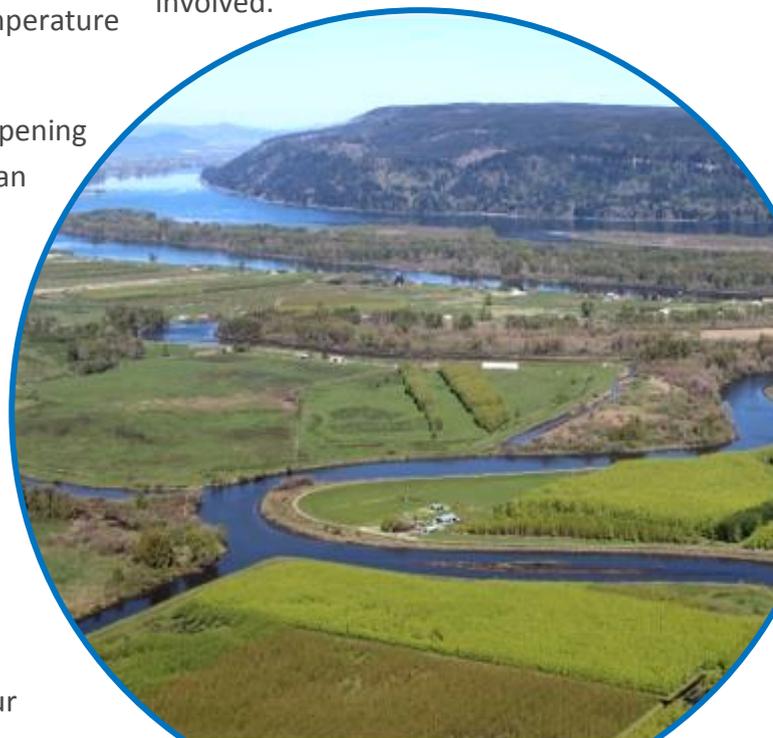
Final drafts of the SAP are available on our website: <https://www.lowercolumbiariver.org/watershed-plan>.

Water quality monitoring continues in our streams with the help of CSWCD staff and Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership. We were successful in securing another year of funding to better understand trends in temperature and nutrients.

Two projects are happening this fall to improve riparian plant diversity on Tide Creek and the Clatskanie River floodplain. New techniques are being applied to these projects to reduce the threat of invasive plant infestation and facilitate long-term success.

We are always seeking new people at our meetings to brainstorm innovative partnerships to sustain

our mission to promote watershed health. In 2020 we are hoping to host a series of forums on topics ranging in interest such as local history, watershed ecology and health, and “resiliency planning” to natural hazards. We are open to project ideas you may have and feedback on our vision and plan for the future. Visit our website for new information posted regularly along with information on how to get involved.



The Lower Columbia River Watershed encompasses 298 square miles along the Columbia River in Columbia County, Oregon.

# NRCS ANNUAL REPORT

*Don Mehlhoff*

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICES DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

(503) 438-3146 • don.mehlhoff@usda.gov • [nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)



I have seen photos and watched stories about the dust bowl. Legislators in Washington DC didn't acknowledge the problem. They just assumed that the Great Plains had an unending supply of topsoil. No one considered soil erosion or other natural resource concerns as major issues. That is until a giant cloud of dust reached the Capital. Hugh Bennett, first Director of the Soil Conservation Service was testifying before Congress on May 11, 1934, and as he was deliberately stalling for time,

a giant dust cloud reached Washington. It helped Mr. Bennett emphasize this tragedy and push legislators into action.

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS), now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was formed by Congress on September 13, 1933. We have been providing conservation planning for 86 years. The Clatskanie Soil and Water Conservation District, first in Columbia County, was created in December of 1946. Since these early years, the SWCD and NRCS have worked in a partnership to address all kinds of natural resource concerns such as soil quality, water quality, healthy plant communities, fish and wildlife habitat and air quality. We work together to make Columbia County a good place to live, with healthy resources and to improve our rural way of life.

Science and methods have come a long way since those early days. Massive soil erosion is no longer common with the adoption of practices like minimum tillage, cover crops, residue management and others. Clean water practices like

filter strips and riparian buffers, nutrient management and others have dramatically reduced water pollution and more. This is not to say that we no longer have natural resource problems. They continue to show up and our tasks won't just disappear.

Also, Columbia County continues to change. The 2017 Census of Agriculture was recently released. Comparing the 2012 census with the newest 2017 census sheds some light on the agricultural trends in the County.

There are pages of information available on this census about crops being grown, livestock, bee keepers and more and more. I wanted to point out from table 1, the trends in farm numbers, sizes and other demographics. As you can see, the number of farms has actually increased over the 5-year period. However, the vast majority of these are small operations with sales below \$2500/year. The land in farms however has dropped by 20%. This could be associated with conversion back to forest, industrial uses, urban growth and other development. The cropland acreage also dropped significantly by 30%.



**CROPS BEING GROWN IN A HIGH TUNNEL**  
— LOCAL SMALL MARKET PRODUCER

## Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

	2012	2017
NUMBER OF FARMS	751	789
LAND IN FARMS (ACRES)	56,668	43,379
TOTAL CROPLAND (ACRES)	18,048	12,646
\$2500 OR LESS IN SALES/YEAR	382	447
MALE OPERATORS	704	743
FEMALE OPERATORS	527	622
AVERAGE AGE OF OPERATORS	59.4	56.6

Table 1

Part of the reason I bring this up is that as farm sizes and types change, so does our need to provide services to a new type of clientele. Historically, NRCS (SCS) spent most of our time and resources assisting full time agricultural operations with larger acreages. The trend is now growing towards small market farms growing specialty crops and livestock. They have many of the same resource concerns (soil health, plant productivity, water quality and quantity, etc.).

The Local Work Group has recognized this and in turn, NRCS has developed a new soil health program to target small operations, providing planning and potential funding to make resource improvements to their farms. The area of the county targeted includes the watersheds along the Columbia River from Clatskanie to Scappoose.

For more information about programs and assistance available through the NRCS and the Columbia SWCD, contact us at 503-397-4555 or stop by and see us at 35285 Millard Road, St. Helens, OR 97051.



PRE-COMMERCIAL THINNING AND SLASH TREATMENT THROUGH EQIP



WETLAND ON PERMANENT WRP EASEMENT IN SCAPPOOSE AREA



WETLAND ON PERMANENT WRP EASEMENT WITH WAPATO

# DRIBBLE CREEK CULVERT REMOVAL



*Selene Keeney* • COLUMBIA SWCD RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST

With funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Broad (OWEB), the Columbia SWCD, in partnership with John Hancock Forest Management, implemented a culvert removal and stream channel restoration project on Dribble Creek in the Summer of 2018. Dribble Creek, a tributary to the Clatskanie River, provides habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed Coho salmon as well as steelhead and other native fish species. The culvert on Hancock Forest Management property was identified as a barrier to fish passage and consequently categorized as a priority culvert for removal by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). The culvert was located approximately 400 feet upstream from the confluence with the Clatskanie River and was undersized and perched on the downstream side. Aquatic Contracting was hired to remove the culvert and a portion of an old access road surrounding it, and to restore the section of the channel where the culvert and access road was located by matching the topography of the reconstructed channel with the section of stream and adjacent floodplain located above and below the culvert crossing. To add structural complexity and jump start the restoration of natural stream processes, twelve trees with root wads, salvaged from the clearing of the removed road grade, were placed in the newly restored channel. Following the completion of the “dirt work” portion of the project, native plants were planted along the restored section of the stream in Fall 2018.



To date, this project is a great success! The removal of the culvert opened up just over one mile of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Coho salmon and other numerous aquatic species. It's been a year since the project was implemented, the native plants are becoming well established and the stream has adjusted nicely, moving streambed material and acting on the added wood to create depositional and erosional geomorphic features akin to the rest of the creek. Over the next couple years, the Columbia SWCD will continue to watch how the creek re-works the restored channel and anticipates that the increased connectivity resulting from the project will continue to provide benefits to the species that depend on the stream and the overall natural resources that occur within Columbia County.



BEFORE RESTORATION



AFTER RESTORATION



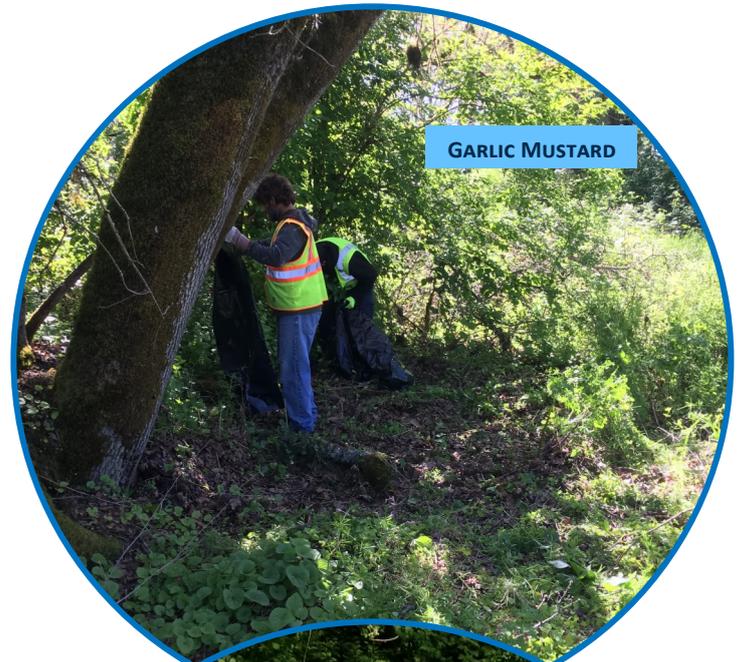
# WEED ALL ABOUT IT



*Crystalyn Bush* • COLUMBIA SWCD RIPARIAN SPECIALIST

## GARLIC MUSTARD IN SCAPPOOSE

The SWCD was once again successful in obtaining funding to treat Garlic mustard along North and mainstem Scappoose Creeks. Manual and chemical treatments took place throughout the spring of 2019. The Port of Columbia County was a new and integral partner in this year's work, offering up cash match and work days with the Columbia County Corrections Crew. The crew cleared areas on Port property for better access and visibility and spent time hand pulling Garlic mustard at these sites.



## GARLIC MUSTARD AND YELLOW ARCHANGEL AT FISHHAWK LAKE

The Columbia SWCD applied for and received funding for a new noxious weeds project this year at Fishhawk Lake. The lake straddles the border of Columbia and Clatsop counties and is drained by Fishhawk creek, a tributary of the Nehalem River. Garlic mustard and Yellow archangel were discovered at a dump site along adjacent land owned by the Oregon Department of Forestry as well as along roads and yards surrounding the lake. Partnering with both the Clatsop and Tillamook SWCDs, a comprehensive project to treat and remove invasives, survey, educate landowners, and conduct restoration plantings is well underway. Treatment and surveys were conducted in the spring of 2019. This project has a lot of support from the Fishhawk Lake Community and is a great example of the benefit of strong partnerships.





### **SPURGE LAUREL IN ST. HELENS**

The SWCD took the Columbia River Youth Corps. out for a day of follow up work at the commercial site in St. Helens where a large amount of Spurge laurel was removed in the summer of 2017. Infestation levels were much lower this time with far fewer mature plants to remove. There is still more work to do, but notable progress has been made.

### **POLICEMEN'S HELMET IN GOBLE**

The SWCD conducted a follow up survey and removal of Policemen's helmet around Little Jack Falls in Goble. Last year the SWCD and Columbia River Youth Corps. spent a day pulling invasive Policemen's helmet along an abandoned stretch of old Hwy. 30 that leads to Little Jack Falls. This year, a survey revealed a small enough population that the project manager was able to remove them by herself in just one morning.



### **GIANT HOGWEED IN ST. HELENS, CLATSKANIE, AND RAINIER**

A report of Giant hogweed along Milton Creek was made by the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council in mid-spring 2019. The report was confirmed by the Columbia SWCD and further reported to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). In June 2019, an ODA employee made a trip up from Salem. Together with the SWCD project manager they treated the Milton Creek site and then visited former hogweed sites throughout the county. One plant was found and treated at a residential site in Clatskanie. The OSU Extension Office also received and responded to a call about Giant hogweed at a residence in Rainier. Giant hogweed is highly toxic and is targeted by ODA for eradication wherever it is found. **Report sightings of Giant hogweed to the Columbia SWCD at: [weeds@columbiaswcd.com](mailto:weeds@columbiaswcd.com) or 1-800-741-6105.**

### **SMALL GRANT PROJECT UPLAND MILTON CREEK**

The SWCD noxious weeds program coordinator is partnering with the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council on a small grant to restore native understory plants and remove invasive species including Yellow archangel, English ivy, English holly, and Periwinkle on a private property adjacent to Milton Creek in St. Helens. The SWCD is responsible for overseeing treatment and removal of the noxious weeds on site. Treatment occurred in June 2019 with follow up removals scheduled for winter 2019 and spring 2020.

# FISHHAWK SIA RESTORATION

*Nathan Herr* • INTERIM DISTRICT MANAGER



Fishhawk Creek is a small stream that runs along the Columbia and Clatsop county border. It flows directly into the Nehalem River just outside of the town of Birkenfeld. Fishhawk Creek passes through a lake created by a man-made dam. Above this dam, the SWCD has been working with a landowner and the Oregon Department of Agriculture to improve water quality in this stream through ODA’s Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) program.

ODA’s SIA program is an evolving way to implement the local water quality priorities in the state. The SIA program is a new approach to adapt and gather more data as it relates to agriculture and water quality. ODA, through conversations with landowners, local partners, and agencies, selected areas to target outreach and education pertaining to their agriculture water quality regulations. The program focuses on improving land conditions and implementing management practices that support clean water and healthy watersheds. ODA selected Fishhawk creek as one of their target areas. Some landowners along the creek received outreach from ODA notifying them of potential resource concerns on their property. ODA encourages landowners to work with local SWCDs and other natural resource agencies to voluntarily address these issues in the hopes of negating any need for enforcement action. In response to ODA’s letters, several landowners approached the SWCD looking for assistance to address water quality concerns on their land.



**BEFORE CONSTRUCTION  
THE EXISTING CONDITION OF THE BANK BEFORE  
WE STARTED WORKING**

This project looked to restore about 350 feet of stream that had an extreme cutbank and a total lack of vegetation through the riparian zone. To combat these issues, the District proposed to peel the banks back, put large wood in the stream to minimize continued erosion, and aggressively replant the riparian zone with native vegetation. This was completed using a design-build methodology, meaning the initial concept was drawn up and was then constructed in the field for a “field fit.” Root wads were installed in the bank. This helps slow down the erosion process, allows the plants to



establish, which in turn holds the streambank in place over time. The banks and riparian areas were planted heavily in an effort to provide a natural buffer to the stream which will capture and filter runoff. Finally, the riparian zone was fenced off with wildlife friendly fence to prevent any domestic animals from entering the creek. All of these actions will have a positive impact on water quality at this site

and further downstream throughout Fishhawk Creek.



The best thing about restoration projects like this one is everyone wins in this scenario. Nature is being restored, the landowners have more productive land that doesn't impede water quality, and ODA is able to show that agricultural landowners are within compliance of the agriculture water quality rules and guidelines. If you have any questions about the SIA process, or about this project, contact Nathan at the District.



# THANK YOU

to the citizens of Columbia County, our Partners and many local contractors  
that we have had the pleasure of working with this year.

Aptum Inc.

Aquatic Contracting LLC

Archaeological Investigations  
Northwest, Inc.

Army Corps. of Engineers

Ash Creek Forest Management

Bemis Printing & Graphics

Biohabitats LLC

Bureau of Land Management

Columbia County

Columbia County Fairgrounds

Columbia County Small  
Woodlands Association

Columbia River Youth Corps.

Clatsop SWCD

Deer Island Nursery

Department of Environmental Quality

Department of State Lands

Hancock Forest Management

Hart Crowser

Institute for Applied Ecology

Local Cities and Municipalities

Local School Districts

Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership

Lower Columbia River Watershed Council

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

National Marine Fisheries Service

National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration

Native Plantscapes NW

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Northwest Oregon Restoration Partnership

Northwest Watershed Restoration, LLC

Oregon Department of Agriculture

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Oregon Department of Forestry

Oregon State University  
Extension Service

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Paulson Printing

Port of Columbia County

Scappoose Bay Watershed Council

Sound Native Plants

Special Districts Association of Oregon

Tillamook SWCD

Upper Nehalem Watershed Council

Weyerhaeuser

Wolf Water Resources, Inc.