



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

Stories of Stewardship

2014-2015

ANNUAL REPORT

District Manager's Message

This year's scorching summer and drought declarations across the state underscore the wisdom of West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District leaders and residents of a decade ago when a stable funding plan and program priorities were approved by voters. Now, WMSWCD staff are eager to share stories about their work and accomplishments in partnership with private land owners, community groups and natural resource agencies across our district and region.

The scope of our reach and scale of priorities extend from a \$7 million project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to Save Sturgeon Lake on Sauvie Island to our \$25,000 support (shared by Portland Audubon and the Columbia Land Trust) of the Backyard Habitat Certification Program, reaching hundreds of SW & NW Portland homeowners. We rely on property owners – farmers, small woodland owners, major Portland harbor industries – as well as neighborhood groups and non-profits to help organize volunteers and to allow our staff to attack weeds and re-plant native vegetation. Our success depends on their active support and ongoing recruitment.

Funding from the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation and its generous donors will transform the decades-long plan to restore Sturgeon Lake into a reality when construction begins in 2017. The Bonneville Power Administration, Metro, Multnomah County, Ducks Unlimited, Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, and scores of individual contributors are essential to our success – described in more detail in this report.

Together we are making a big difference at a critical time in conserving not only water and soil, but our entire habitat for wildlife and human benefit. Our children and future generations are the true beneficiaries of our hard work and investment in the past decade and years ahead. In the future, we are also committed to reach out to communities of color and underserved constituents. We thank all of you for your commitment and partnership.

Dick Springer



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Our Board:

Terri Preeg Riggsby, Zone 5
Chairwoman

Shawn Looney, Director At-Large, *Vice Chairwoman*

Weston Miller, Director At-Large, *Treasurer*

Brian Lightcap, Zone 4,
Secretary

Kim Peterson, Zone 1

Jane Hartline, Zone 2

George Sowder, Zone 3

Associate Directors:

Finlay Anderson

Jan Hamer

Susan Weedall

Bob Wiley, Sr.

The District fiscal year 2014-2015 Financial Report is available at the Conservation District office. Due to the schedule of the yearly audit, figures were not ready by press time. However, any questions can be answered by contacting District Manager

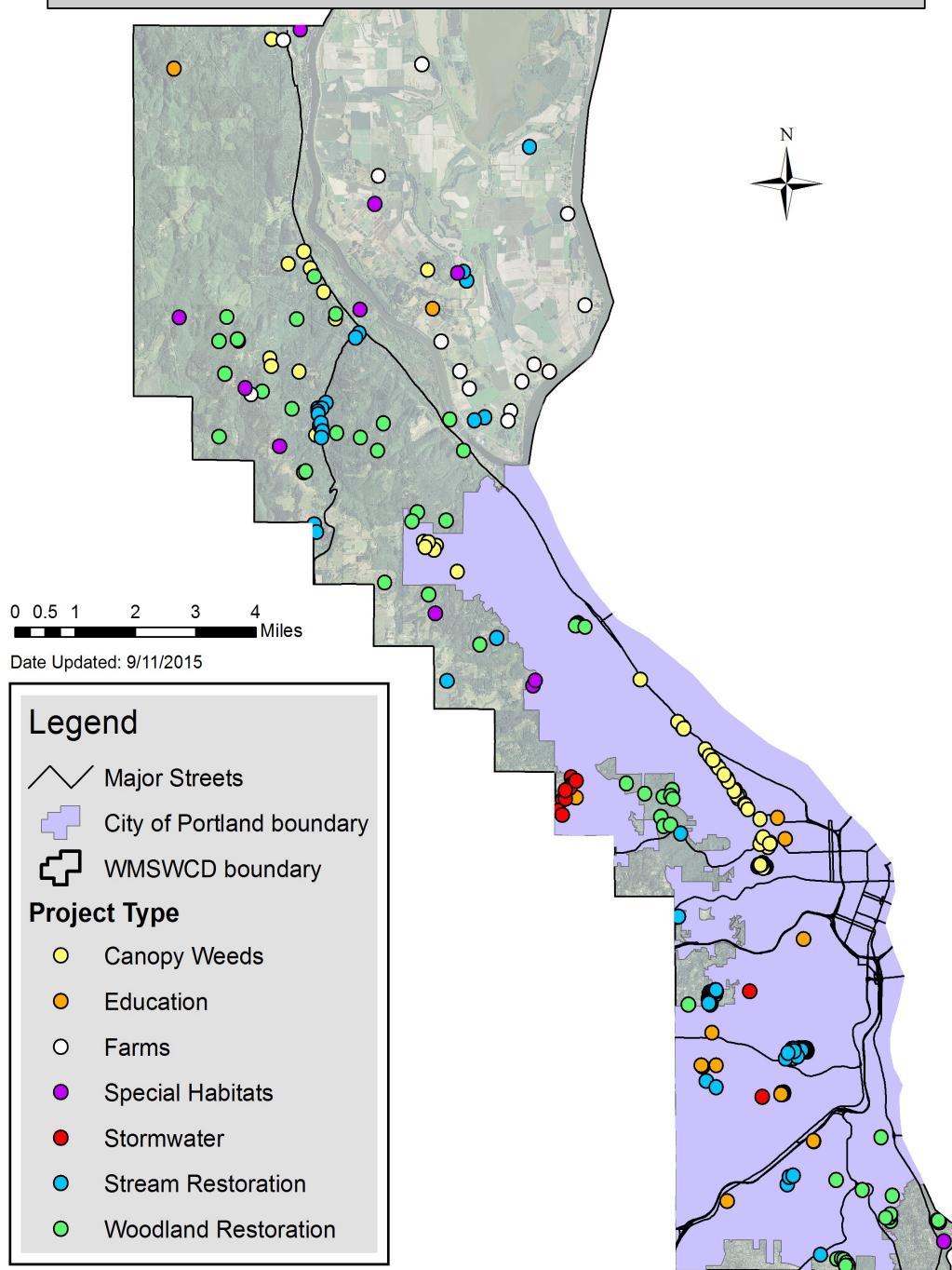
Dick Springer at 503.238.4775, ext. 106 or dick@wmswcd.org.

A Snapshot of Our Projects



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

District Conservation Projects - FY 2014-2015



Our Staff:

Dick Springer,
District Manager

Michael Ahr,
Forest Conservationist

Michelle Delepine,
Invasive Species Program Coord.

Scott Gall,
Rural Conservationist

Kammy Kern-Korot,
Senior Conservationist

Michele Levis,
Controller & Budget Officer

Carolyn Myers Lindberg,
Communications Coordinator

Mary Logalbo,
Urban Conservationist

Francine Martin,
Office Manager

Laura Taylor,
Conservation Technician

USDA/NRCS Staff:

Kim Galland,
NRCS District Conservationist

Diversity & Equity

In 2014 and 2015, WMSWCD staff attended several workshops on equity and diversity. While the District is proud of the diverse partners and landowners it's worked with, we have decided to increase our emphasis on serving our constituents equitably and are exploring strategies to add diversity to the staff and board of directors.

Staff and board members are completing a Racial Equity Assessment through a program organized by The Intertwine Alliance. By initially focusing on racial equity, we can address Portland's most glaring inequities while developing policies and practices that result in more accessible programs and services for all. Upon completion of the training, the District will have a draft Racial Equity Policy with strategies to implement it.

Why is this effort important?

- ◊ Environmental health impacts all and engaging and welcoming all stakeholders is crucial to ensuring success of the District's mission.
- ◊ District programs may not engage many racially diverse audiences and we lack the demographic information to ensure we are reaching a broad range of constituents.
- ◊ The current make up of our board and staff is not as diverse as it could be.
- ◊ Having diverse perspectives in organizational decision-making would increase our District's overall strength and relevance.
- ◊ The District will be better able to identify and address the priorities of underserved communities if it works directly with them to ensure messages and programs are meaningful and accessible.

Our Racial Equity Policy will include the following:

- A vision statement that highlights the aim to welcome, engage and provide access to people of color in all facets of our organization
- District Non-Discrimination Policy (see above)
- Intended policy outcomes
- A plan for resource allocation
- The role partnerships will play in addressing equity
- Concrete next steps and accountability mechanisms
- Action items in staff member work plans that address equity through District programming



Planting day at Markham Elementary

Education



Urban Watershed Mentors

Twenty-eight engaged volunteers graduated from our Urban Watershed Mentors program this past year. Volunteers, students and professionals received intensive training, which included a 21 hour field and classroom component, and completed a 25 hour service project to learn how to develop and implement conservation plans. At the end of this year's session, the graduates got together at a celebratory "State of the Watershed" event at Tryon Creek State Park, where they showcased their conservation plans for partner agencies. The program benefits the Conservation District's natural resources by creating more knowledgeable and engaged land stewardship leaders who help create and guide conservation plans from concept to implementation.

School Gardens

This year Laura Taylor joined our staff, in part to coordinate the District's education program. Technical assistance and funding from this program has allowed four District schools to install

or improve native habitat, pollinator, and edible food gardens. Students at Sauvie Island Academy and Ainsworth, Hayhurst, and Markham Elementary Schools helped plan their gardens, and then had fun digging holes, discovering earthworms, and planting their favorite native plants this past March. Laura worked with teachers, parents and volunteers to incorporate the gardens into year-long lessons on watershed health, plant growth, pollinator symbiosis, soil health, wildlife habitat and much more. The program also helped send four Sauvie Island Academy classes on field trips to Sauvie Island Center, and sponsored the Forest Park Elementary School's SOLVE Green Team. It visited Cedar Mill Creek once a month to remove invasive blackberry, install native plants, and learn to conduct stream macroinvertebrate surveys. The



Planting at Marquam



Planting at Hayhurst Elementary

District also provided environmental education training to enthusiastic teachers at St. Clare Elementary and helped fund Friends of Tryon Creek's efforts to develop a regionally-focused environmental curriculum.

Adult Workshops

The District holds two large annual events designed for general adult education on a variety of topics relevant to landowners: Soil School in the spring and Rural Living Field Day in the fall. Soil School is a popular program, attracting more and more people every year. Forty people signed up for Soil School in 2012 compared with 135 folks in 2015! Rural Living Field Day is held outdoors on a working farm or at Sauvie Island's Howell Territorial Park and attracts close to 70 landowners who want to learn about everything from soils to rainwater management, pollinators, orchards, woodlands, wildlife and stream health.

Invasive Weeds

The District continues to expand private landowner outreach to survey and control high priority weed species before they can become established. This year we increased our total survey area to nearly 1,500 acres! The weeds we continue to focus on are garlic mustard, knotweed and spurge laurel, however several other important target species were also detected and controlled in smaller numbers.

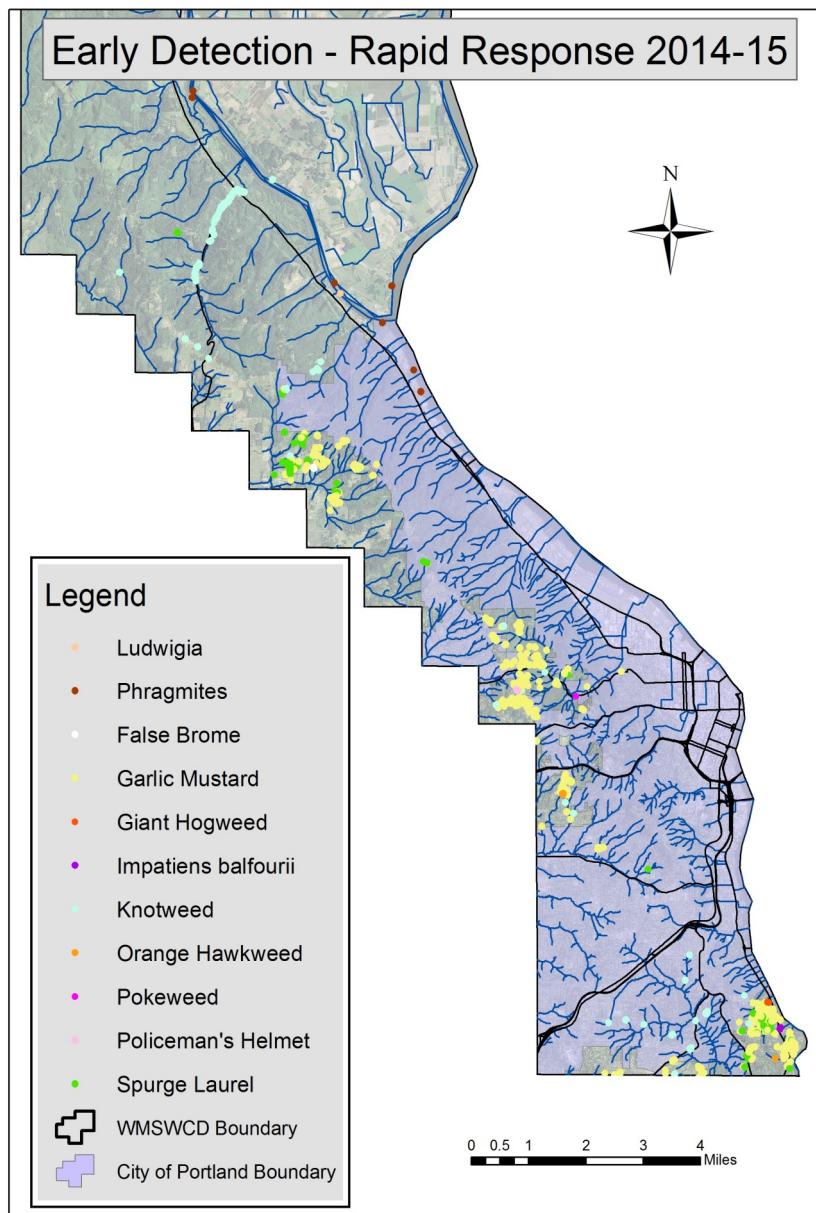
In partnership with several other agencies, the District led three "Weed Watcher" workshops in Southwest Portland, the Skyline area and Scappoose. In total, 27 volunteers were trained on how to identify and report high priority invasive plant species.

Garlic mustard season brought major gains and challenges. A number of sites previously treated had little regrowth. Overall, infestation density continues to drop, however a few new extremely dense patches were found and controlled. The most significant was discovered by a couple of Weed Watcher extraordinaires!

With assistance from the Oregon Department of Agriculture, aquatic invasive plant surveys were conducted around southern Sauvie Island and the Linnton Harbor. Several *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) sites received first-time treatment. Also, it's important to note the aquatic invasive, *Ludwigia*, was discovered (and controlled) at a single site in Multnomah Channel.



Ludwigia found in
Multnomah Channel



For two years in a row, no new orange hawkweed or pokeweed plants were found at two District-managed sites in SW Portland, however, a single new discovery of each of these species was found at other sites. In the Riverview area, a small *Impatiens balfourii* population was found and controlled. Elsewhere in the neighborhood one of three managed giant hogweed sites did not have any new infestations.

EDRR (FY 2014-2015)	Survey Area Acres	Properties	Gross Area	Net Area
False brome	12	2	0.05 ac	400 ft ²
Garlic mustard	>1000	200	25.8 ac	5.1 ac
Giant hogweed	5	2	500 ft ²	100 ft ²
Impatiens balfourii	5	2	0.3 ac	300 ft ²
Knotweed	120	45	7.8 ac	0.4 ac
Ludwigia	150	1	100 ft ²	100 ft ²
Phragmites australis	160	10	0.6 ac	0.2 ac
Pokeweed	4	2	5 ft ²	5 ft ²
Policeman's helmet	1	2	100 ft ²	15 ft ²
Spurge laurel	110	30	1.1 ac	0.3 ac
Total	1564	295	35.8 ac	6 ac

Source: WMSWCD EDRR Program using Fulcrum App

We thank the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for their continued support of our garlic mustard program through an Oregon State Weed Board grant.



Canopy Weeds

The District's canopy weed removal program has grown each year since inception. We expanded the rural program north to cover nearly all of the woodlands in the Tualatin Mountains that face the Multnomah Channel and Willamette River. The urban program focused on Linnton properties as well as properties just south of Skyline Boulevard next to Forest Park.

Forest Park Conservancy's urban crew accomplished so much more than "freeing" 3,520 trees from ivy and clematis this year! Crew members went door-to-door to successfully recruit new participants and collected valuable survey information about invasive weeds while conducting program outreach.

In 2016, the rural program will continue its focus north, and the urban program will expand its buffer since all property owners directly adjacent to Forest Park have been contacted and offered this program. The urban program will aim to conduct this work in select priority watersheds and will be continuing the door-to-door outreach and survey efforts. There will also be an

assessment of other urban park perimeters where we might deliver this successful program since our initial target goal was achieved.

This year, we treated canopy weeds on more than 87 acres, with major impact near the mouth of Ennis Creek and several properties in the Holbrook and Linnton communities.



Urban Canopy Weed Program Statistics			
Year	Participant Landowners	Trees Cleared	Acres Impacted
2011-12	11	3424	56
2012-13	45	4331	115
2013-14	45	5232	187
2014-15	42	3520	48
Total	143	16507	406

Neighborhood Projects

Stormwater

Most stormwater management projects involve diverting water into an area where it can filter down into the soil. But in Portland's west hills, steep slopes and high groundwater levels make that type of system unsafe for most properties. Reducing surface water pollution and stream erosion in those areas is challenging.



Stormwater planting

This year, the District created ten stormwater management plans at the request of landowners dealing with these challenging conditions. In addition, the district supported a workshop for 22 landowners on how to design and build their own systems, reducing annual stormwater runoff by 24,000 gallons and cutting down soil erosion by 21 pounds of sediment per year.

An innovative stormwater demonstration project was also completed, thanks in part to an \$18,000 Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) grant and a strong partnership with the Forest Heights Homeowner's Association (HOA). This project resulted in a comprehensive

stormwater management plan for the headwaters of the Cedar Mill Watershed and informational tours for residents, plus online tools that include an interactive map, videos, webinars and stormwater practices fact sheets! The Forest Heights HOA has already started to implement their new plan with an aggressive goal of installing trees on a majority of its non-forested hillsides.



Meadowscaped strip

Meadowscaping

This spring, the District, its partners and local landscapers, toured a few Portland Urban Meadowscaping Pilot (PUMP) projects. Additional tours were also provided to Tualatin Basin Public Awareness Committee members and interested garden groups to showcase these unique landscapes. At a new SW Portland demonstration site, young students participated in an educational garden plant program. They were each given a garden plant to research and care for and eventually plant in the project's garden. Core partners will compile a comprehensive guide this year to help other land managers install and manage meadowscaping projects. The District managed the technical review committee, and hired both a local expert to co-author the publication and a landscape design firm to come up with garden design templates. The publication is scheduled for release this spring.

Soil Health

This year was not only the International Year of Soil, it also marked a change in the way WMSWCD emphasizes soil in its programs. Previously, WMSWCD worked closely with OSU Extension to provide Sauvie Island farmers with detailed soil testing to inform them of the effectiveness of their fertilizer management plans. In the fall of 2014, the Soil Health Program shifted from one of education to one of implementation. As an incentive to farmers trying out cover crops in their planting rotations, WMSWCD provided funding for up to 10 acres of cover crop seed. The Conservation District provided the seed, but it was up to the farmer to plant and maintain the crops. Ten farmers ordered seed and up to 70 acres were planted in the fall of 2014.

The Soil Health Program aims to encourage farmers to engage in soil building practices. Cover crops are just one part of an overall soil health strategy that follows four basic principles:

1. Keep it covered,
2. Limit disturbance,
3. Keep a living root in the soil, and
4. Diversify crops to benefit microorganisms



Pea cover crop

Improving soil health can increase soil fertility, reduce erosion, limit the need for pesticides (by providing habitat for predators of pests), and both improve the infiltration of water and the soils' ability to hold water.

In the fall of 2015, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service begins a new soil health partnership with Clackamas and Multnomah Counties. The Soil Health Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) will provide farmers access to additional resources to expand the soil building activities they started with the Conservation District's help. The CIS opens access to farmers not yet participating and increases our ability to help certified organic farms. While this was the official "Year of Soil," next year could be one of the greatest yet for soil conservation in our District!

Special Habitats

The District was involved with some exciting work to protect special habitats over the past year. The largest project "released" increasingly rare Oregon white oak trees from the shade and competition of encroaching Douglas fir trees at Malinowski Farm. The landowner, with guidance from the District, took steps to protect some 70 oak trees in 10 acres of mixed woodland, where native fawn lilies and camas are found. In the process of protecting this diminishing habitat -- which is so important to wildlife such as the acorn woodpecker, western gray squirrel and hundreds of insect species -- seven loads of Douglas fir logs were shipped to the mill and the landowner earned a profit.



"Freeing" native oak from ivy

Other special habitats enhanced this year include man-made ponds, wetlands, Oregon oak woodlands, and hedgerows, for pollinators and other wildlife. Accomplishments include:

- * Two pond sites were planted with native trees and shrubs, including one West hills site which supports breeding frogs and salamanders and a Sauvie Island pond with turtles where the dominant reed canary grass is finally being tamed.
- * Invasive ivy and other aggressive weeds were treated on a 30 acre oak woodland on Sauvie Island to protect heritage trees.
- * The District planted 360 new Oregon oak trees at 10 upland projects (including three locations with meadow) and gave away 10 more oaks with educational materials at a Sauvie Island school fundraiser.
- * Ten native hedgerows were installed with 3,500 plants (46 different species), and meadowscaping is more prevalent.
- * Staff contributed to the OakQuest effort to map oaks throughout the Metro region, involving citizens and a Native American youth leadership program.

Stream Restoration

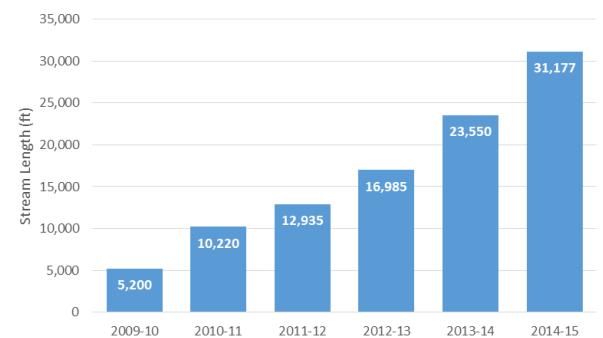
In its fifth year, the Healthy Streams Program (HSP) increased the number of project sites by nine, planting more than 15,000 new native trees and shrubs in 8.5 acres of riparian area along 7,600 feet of stream in 6 different watersheds. The program now includes a total of 30 sites, 35 acres and 6 miles of streamside area; the cumulative number of plants installed is nearly 51,000. The District also monitors water quality in two HSP streams and Miller Creek. Data taken from seven stations reveals that McCarthy and Crabapple Creeks are too hot for salmon in the summer months. HSP aims to keep stream temperatures cool by adding native woody vegetation to shade the creeks where needed.

Partly because of its status as salmon-bearing, McCarthy Creek is a key watershed for our work. We now maintain more than 10 acres of riparian area as part of 10 projects, with two additional sites maintained by landowners. The District also maintains a bioswale to capture sediment running off the roads before it enters the creek. Knotweed control is a major focus along nearly the entire length of the lower creek as is our work with staff and residents of the Native American Rehabilitation Association at the bottom of the watershed. The District helps federal partners improve the 120 acres of “wetlands conservation project” at the mouth, which includes 4,000 feet of stream.

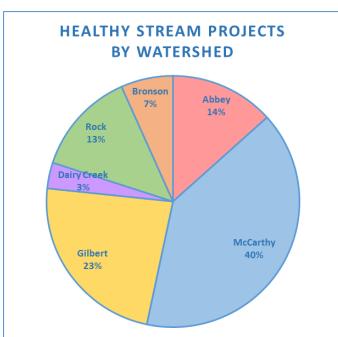


We also conduct stream restoration in the urban realm of our District. This year we created conservation plans with 59 landowners, installed 1,500 native plants and treated invasive plants across 60 acres in the Tualatin, Riverview and Tryon Creek Watersheds.

Cumulative Stream Length Planted at Healthy Stream Sites



HEALTHY STREAM PROJECTS BY WATERSHED



Sturgeon Lake



This past year marked some major funding and project milestones. To date, over \$1.8 million has been raised and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is rapidly drawing up engineering designs to restore Dairy Creek, replace the Reeder Road culverts with a 100-foot bridge and reopen Sturgeon Lake to the Columbia River.

When WMSWCD originally set out to secure its match funds for the \$5 million commitment from USACE, the goal was to raise \$1.665 million. Starting in 2012, with only a commitment of \$42,500 from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), the funding campaign looked like a very steep climb. While it took some time, this year we flew right past the original goal. Contributing partners include Bonneville Power Administration (\$1 million), Multnomah County (\$300,000), Metro (\$100,000), ODFW (\$100,000), OWEB (\$42,500) and private donations secured by Oregon Wildlife (almost \$250,000).

The success of the fundraising campaign means WMSWCD can now cover the additional cost associated with a full channel spanning bridge, the optimum solution. In the original plan, USACE called for the replacement of the two existing 12 foot diameter culverts with two 42 foot wide culverts. While that would greatly increase the cross-section of the stream, it would leave a large obstruction in the middle of the channel. Due to USACE policy, additional costs to put in a fully spanning bridge will be left to WMSWCD. Last fall, as Oregon Wildlife surpassed our original fundraising goal, WMSWCD was in a position to push the campaign further in order to cover the additional costs of the bridge (estimated around \$400,000). Almost immediately, the Hilltop Foundation pledged to cover half of that cost (\$200,000) if WMSWCD and partners could come up with the other half. On August 28th, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife informed WMSWCD that a grant had been awarded to the Conservation District for \$100,000. Along with additional funds acquired by Oregon Wildlife, over half of the Hilltop Foundation match has already been secured.

Woodland Stewardship

This year, the woodland stewardship program took on a more targeted and stronger focus. We've placed more emphasis on assisting landowners with forest thinning projects, and increased fundraising to help get the work done. Our woodland program will always be a resource to help residents manage invasive weeds, but in the coming year look for more outreach on thinning, forest road maintenance, and wildfire risk reduction to protect homes and property.

Accomplishments:

Forest Stewardship Planning – Every good project starts with a good plan. This year we completed six Stewardship Plans on 281 rural acres, making this the most productive year yet for forest conservation planning, and leading to larger forest thinning projects. In the urban realm, we worked with 30 landowners to create conservation plans focused on woodland health.

Funding – This year the forestry program raised nearly \$35,000 to help landowners treat invasive weeds, thin forests, repair roads, and plant native trees and shrubs on 60 acres. We received an \$8,500 grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to continue our work at River View Cemetery where we're replacing ivy, holly, and blackberry with native plants. We set up contracts to thin more than 35 acres in November thanks to our program funds and more than \$20,000 in Environmental Quality Incentive Program funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We're also working on additional grants to ramp up our work in the Greater Forest Park and Tualatin Mountains regions.



Wildfire risk reduction – In late 2014, we started our first “fire-safe” project at a home in the Rock Creek Watershed. We’re helping the landowner replace blackberry, install fire-resistant native plants, and remove limbs that were creating a hazard near the home. We aim to do more of this work in the coming year.

Woodland road improvements – Winter rain is tough on forest roads. Improvements to road crossings can reduce literally tons of sediment from entering our streams. In summer 2015, we worked with a landowner in McCarthy Creek to build sedimentation basins near two road culverts that will greatly improve drainage and be much easier to clean out and maintain.





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