District Manager’s Message

As we share our accomplishments over the past productive year, we are thankful for the cooperation of District private landowners and community partners and our elected board’s support in a difficult budget year.

Most of our restoration programs and on-the-ground projects extend beyond one year depending on location, ownership and specific goals. Decades of development and population growth have degraded water quality, created soil erosion and substantially reduced wildlife habitat and native species and it takes many years of work and funding to see the results.

Our outreach and networking with land owners, conservation partners and local leaders is essential for continued success. Besides our ongoing programs, in the coming year we’ll be working on funding Sturgeon Lake preservation, Multnomah County review of Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel land use and transportation policies, cooperation & coordination with regional partners, and Portland Harbor Superfund and proposed mitigation projects.

Dick Springer
Meadowscaping Program

The Conservation District is helping landowners convert lawns to meadows to benefit wildlife and reduce pollution! Many folks may not be aware that lawns do little to filter storm water or help improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Lawns also require polluting fertilizers and lots of time and effort. Beautiful meadows of bunch grasses and native wildflowers have deep roots and are drought resistant. Meadows better filter storm water and enhance wildlife habitat for birds, pollinators and other beneficial insects.

The meadowscaping program is analyzing six demonstration sites and providing seed to encourage the creation of new sites. One of the demonstration sites is in the front yard of our Urban Conservationist, Mary Logalbo, who spoke to over 300 interested partners and landowners this past year about the program. Pacific Northwest Urban Meadowscaping (PNUM) is a collaboration by West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District, Portland Parks & Recreation’s City Nature Division, Columbia Land Trust/Backyard Habitat Certification Program (BYHCP) and the Xerces Society.
Invasive Weed Survey

The District was hired by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) this year to conduct an invasive plant survey along 12 miles of de-energized power lines and all of their prospective access roads in the West Hills of Portland. The lines are slated for pole removal this summer. District staff recommended specific cleaning stations be set up to prevent the spread of plant seeds that cling to the boots and vehicles of field technicians as they remove poles. The survey allowed us to access hard-to-reach areas and complete detailed plant maps throughout high priority forest land and oak savannas in our District. Only a few patches of high priority *Early Detection and Rapid Response* weeds were found and treated. The District is working with BPA and others on a plan to restore some of the corridors to benefit wildlife and private residents, who manage the land. District staff saw a lot of wildlife already using the corridor including deer, quail, and coyotes.

Urban Watershed Mentors

Twenty residents graduated from the District’s six month *Urban Watershed Mentor Training* in June! The program creates volunteer leaders who learn how to guide a restoration project from planning to implementation using a mentor model that provides new volunteer leaders and landowners with community support, maximizing the amount of restoration work accomplished in the District. To be certified, mentees must attend six classes for a total of 24 hours of training, complete one community conservation plan and all assigned homework, devote at least 15 hours to implementing the plan and mentoring new trainees.

New graduates are now implementing their conservation plans and getting ready to mentor the next wave of trainees. We’re grateful to the following organizations for helping make this program a great experience: Tryon Creek Watershed Council, Southwest Watershed Resource Center, City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, SOLVE and Green Girl Land Development Solutions.
Canopy Weeds Program

The Conservation District teamed up with Forest Park Conservancy and their work crew made up of Outdoor School educators, to deliver a stellar canopy weed treatment program to landowners surrounding Forest Park. Invasive ivy and clematis were treated in 4,331 trees across 45 properties impacting a total of 115 acres! This also resulted in at least three new restoration projects with landowners in high priority areas that will impact approximately 85 acres of our District!

Evaluating and Enhancing Ponds

District staff and Board Chairwoman Jane Hartline, an enthusiastic volunteer, are assisting nine landowners to improve wildlife habitat at a number of Sauvie Island ponds.

The project began with a District sponsored turtle study to see which sites were being used and which held the most promise for habitat. Staff and volunteers visited sites to assess baseline conditions and survey amphibian egg masses to determine which frog and salamander species were using the ponds. Staff also took along various specialists, including wildlife biologists and botanists, and watershed health experts. We considered water quality as well as plants and wildlife species/habitat at each pond. We found various dragonflies, fish, snails, water beetles, and desirable plants such as native wapato. The next step is to prioritize actions that match landowner objectives. Conservation actions may include felling trees into the ponds to add basking areas for turtles and dragonflies; adding native vegetation for food and shelter; controlling invasive species such as purple loosestrife and reed canary grass; managing vegetation for sun/shade and wildlife access; and changing strategies for algae and mosquito control.

Staff is also working on a large conservation and livestock manure management project in the Rock Creek watershed, which has four ponds heavily used by red-legged frogs.
Getting Rid of the Worst Invasive Plants

Garlic Mustard

Nearly all known garlic mustard sites were controlled this year thanks to expanded outreach efforts, landowner participation, and financial assistance from an Oregon State Weed Board grant. More than 200 properties were surveyed this year and garlic mustard was located on 120 sites (both newly detected and previously managed locations). Most properties only had small infestations and new ones do not appear to be expanding. In a few instances, only one flowering plant was found and removed before it could set seed—early detection, rapid response, in action!

✓ 800 pounds of garlic mustard pulled
✓ 8.3 acres of garlic mustard was controlled

We thank our agency partners, dedicated volunteers and participating landowners for making this garlic mustard season another success story!

Other Weeds on the Early Detection-Rapid Response List

▪ The only known orange hawkweed in our district was removed in the Sylvan Creek area. This was the second year of control and only required the removal of one plant.

▪ An intentionally planted but isolated patch of pokeweed in the Riverview neighborhood was removed.

▪ A 2,000 square foot false brome infestation was controlled in the upper Abbey Creek area; one of only two known in our District.

▪ Expanded giant hogweed outreach led us to control two new isolated infestations before spreading seed.

▪ Some of the last spurge laurel in the Germantown area was removed.

▪ Knotweed control expanded to Skyline Ridge and Tryon Creek, while it significantly declined in the McCarthy Creek area after years of control.

▪ The District partnered with the Oregon Department of Agriculture to control the common reed, Phragmites australis, at several sites along the banks of the Willamette River.
Healthy Streams Program

The Healthy Streams Program now encompasses 12 projects in four target watersheds, plus one planned for Bronson Creek. Four sites were planted in February, including one in the Rock Creek watershed, one on McCarthy Creek, and one along the Gilbert River on Sauvie Island. As of 2013, more than 15,000 feet of stream (nearly three miles!) has been planted with nearly 24,000 plants. All projects are maintained by the landowner or district-hired contractors, who had to build and install wire cages around priority trees to protect against busy beaver on the McCarthy Creek sites.

McCarthy Creek received added District attention this year in the form of a stream clean-up in September, 2012. Forty volunteers and staff collected over 750 pounds of glass, plastic, aluminum, scrap metal and tires; including one giant truck tire, a car door, a trampoline and a dishwasher! We also designed and mounted watershed signs, in collaboration with Multnomah County. Look for the signs along Cornelius Pass -- at both the top and bottom of the watershed -- as well as on Sheltered Nook road. The signs are meant to encourage awareness and stewardship of this salmon-bearing stream.

The Healthy Streams Program provides full-funding for riparian restoration projects on target waterways, some of which bear salmon. Also, 50% cost-share may be available on other rural streams of importance.
Education

“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” ~ Aldo Leopold

The Conservation District is committed to educating those we serve. An ethic of land stewardship belongs to all irrespective of age, profession, wealth or creed. With that as our guide, we take a holistic approach to our work, engaging in programs provide meaningful environmental education from cradle to grave.

Youth Education

In 2012-13 our school garden program grew from just two gardens to 10! With help from our education coordinator, edible and native wildlife habitat gardens were designed by students, parents, and teachers and serve as outdoor learning spaces for school communities. Our work also included a pond enhancement project and multiple classroom presentations on subjects ranging from soils to worm composting and trail maintenance. The District also began its pilot year of a long-term partnership with Friends of Tryon Creek and PSU’s Center for Science Education to provide professional development training to teachers on using inquiry-based science outdoors. Sites for 2013-14 projects are being chosen and a partnership with Biomimicry Oregon formed to broaden the continuing education opportunities we bring to teachers.

Adult Education

To increase the effectiveness of our work and that of our partners and to build capacity for regional environmental education for youth and adults, we are actively engaged in work with a number of coalitions, councils and committees including The Intertwine Conservation Education Leadership Council, Multnomah County OSU Extension Advisory Council, Environmental Education Association of Oregon, Tryon Creek Watershed Council Education & Outreach Committee, and Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network. Along with our founding partner Metro, the Conservation District helped formed ACE (Adult Conservation Education) to bring together regional non-profit/public partners to help cultivate conservationists and stewards that focus on public information and behavior change, including creating a better native plant brochure, refining training materials for landcapers, and more. We also help fund the Beginning Urban Farmer Apprentice (BUFA) Program, an 8 month, season-long training for future farmers and community land stewards.

Oak Habitat Protection & Expansion

The Conservation District worked with eight landowners on a variety of oak habitat projects this year. On Sauvie Island, the District helped treat invasive English ivy on 30 acres of mixed oak woodlands at two sites, benefiting more than 100 rare Oregon white oaks.

Continued...
Assisting Our Partners

In 2012-2013, we funded a variety of exciting stewardship and restoration programs by our partner organizations totaling $103,841. Three projects were funded by the District’s FISH (Financial Incentives for Sustainable Habitat) Grant program:

- **Tryon Creek Watershed Council/Life Community Farm; $10,000**
- **Tryon Creek Watershed Council/Watershed Mentors Program; $10,000**
- **Portland Bureau of Parks & Recreation/Green Spaces Restoration & Urban Naturalist Team; $8,141**

In addition, five partner organizations and three specific partner projects were funded:

- **Backyard Habitat Certification Program**
  - $20,000
- **Tryon Creek Watershed Council**
  - $12,500
- **West Willamette Restoration Partnership**
  - $3,700
- **4 County Cooperative Weed Management Agency**
  - $1,500
- **SOLVE Team Up Sites**
  - $10,000
- **Forest Park Conservancy**
  - $11,136
- **Depave**
  - $10,000
- **SW Watershed Resources Center**
  - $6,864

At Malinowski Farm, several Douglas fir trees were “girdled” (A ring is cut through the bark to slowly kill the tree and leave it standing for use as a wildlife feature) to allow more space for Oregon oak.

A west hills landowner is removing competing conifers around a newly discovered mature Oregon oak. Invasive blackberry was controlled and the area re-planted with additional Oregon oak, plus 1,000 native trees and shrubs. The neighbors were so excited by the changes that they started clearing blackberry and ivy for their own project this year, with help from the District. Near Germantown road, the District controlled invasive spurge laurel in an oak woodland of more than 50 trees and Oregon oak was enhanced in seven acre project on a 34 acre property nearby.
Rural West Hills Ivy Removal in Holbrook Area

In 2012, the District expanded its canopy weed removal program to attack ivy in the Holbrook Community, around NW Morgan Road and Lower Logie Trail. The Rural West Hills Ivy program was launched in late summer and continued in the spring of 2013. We’re excited to report that 19 properties totaling 186 acres are now free of tree ivy, and in exchange for this work, the landowners have agreed to keep the trees free of ivy in the future. Even more exciting, we’ve made some great contacts and have now developed two Forest Stewardship Plans with landowners and have additional forest conservation projects on eight properties.

Working around nesting birds

In this area, most of our songbirds nest in the shrub layer around our forests between April 15-July 31. In February, the Conservation District hosted a workshop for landowners focused on reducing impacts to our nesting birds during this time. The workshop at Sauvie Island Grange Hall was wildly successful attracting 39 landowners who learned a lot from our speakers and from seeing conservation projects in the nearby Grange Forest. Audubon Society of Portland and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife helped teach this workshop where we discussed important bird areas in our region, timing ground work according to nesting times, and supplying supplemental habitat with brush piles. We now write conservation plans with these concepts in mind; spraying in March or September and cutting brush and trees in late August-October.

Working Lands Effort

Staff worked hard this year to improve agricultural water quality and ensure vibrant and productive working lands within the Conservation District. The biggest change to our Working Lands program involved new efforts to identify and reach out to all of our livestock and horse owners. While our Healthy Streams Program continues to provide assistance to landowners directly along streams, our new “Livestock Survey” was a partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture to proactively locate our horse and livestock properties. In the fall of 2012, we identified almost 150 properties with active or recent animal husbandry or use. Nearly all of these did not show up on the “Ag Census.”

Continued...
As fall turned to winter, we contacted everyone in District Zones 1 and 2 - mostly Sauvie Island and McNamee Road. All told, we mailed to 40 landowners and spoke to 26 of them over the phone. This generated six on-site visits for our rural conservationist – a return rate of about 15%, which is in line with similar outreach efforts.

Starting in the fall of 2013, we will expand this outreach campaign to Zone 3 (the northwest corner of the Conservation District). We hope for similar or better results given that there have been a similar number of properties identified through the survey.

Here’s a summary of our efforts to outreach, educate and work with agricultural landowners. The types of practices include riparian plantings, wildlife damage prevention, pasture renovation, and manure storage/composting.

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