



WEST MULTNOMAH




Soil & Water Conservation District

www.wmswcd.org

Seasonal tip

Be sure to feed your backyard birds, including hummingbirds, during the winter!

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A Change in Leadership

The last few months were a whirlwind of meetings and interviews as the Board of Directors and staff of West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District said "goodbye" to long-time District Manager Dick Springer and "hello" to new District Manager Jim Cathcart.

Jim comes to the District with 26 years of experience in forest policy, forest health and monitoring, management planning, and communications, the last 17 years with the Oregon Department of Forestry. As a Portland resident, Mr. Cathcart is familiar with the variety of soil and water resource issues facing landowners in the District, whether they own farms, forests or gardens. After obtaining a Forestry degree at Humboldt State University, he earned a masters in Forest Economics at the University of Idaho, and a doctorate in Forest Management and Economics at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Mr. Cathcart will begin his new position Monday, January 25, 2015 and says, "I am very excited for this opportunity to serve as Manager for the District. I am looking forward to continuing the District's success in helping private landowners, operators and businesses secure Portland's livability through healthy soil, clean water and diverse habitats."

We're so grateful for the leadership of our past Manager, Dick Springer, a former state legislator and attorney, who retired after nine years with the District. He is credited with many things, including growing the staff and expanding the District's programs, as well as shepherding the signing of an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore Sturgeon Lake on Sauvie Island. His passion for the environment is lifelong and the list of his accomplishments is too long to list here. We thank him for his leadership, tireless work, and friendship and wish him well in retirement!

Urban Watershed Mentors Training

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) announces the fourth Urban Watershed Mentors Training series. This unique training is directed at volunteers interested in becoming knowledgeable community watershed leaders through a mentor program that engages local partnership organizations.

Through a series of sessions, program participants gain the skills necessary to guide a project from planning to implementation. The program uses a mentor model to provide new volunteers with applied skills in a hands-on learning environment. Participants create a conservation plan for priority projects with guidance from a mentor partner and WMSWCD staff. The model directs trained and experienced watershed leaders and landowners to partner with new participants to maximize the restoration work that can be done throughout the District's urban west Willamette Watersheds.



Please watch our website to register for training sessions this spring! The program fills up quickly, so for early notification or additional information contact Mary Logalbo; mary@wmswcd.org or 503.238.4775, ext. 103.

Our Winter Feathered Friends

During winter, you might expect most birds to migrate south. On the contrary, there's quite a bit of bird activity now and with climate change, you may see more than in the past. Species like Anna's hummingbird now hang around all winter, in great part due to the number of feeders and the diversity of flowering plants available. If you stock a suet feeder or maintain wild habitat, you'll likely see chickadees, bushtits, towhees, juncos, song sparrows, and possibly Bewick's wren, Scrub or Stellar's jays, depending on habitat type. Even woodpeckers will frequent a suet feeder. Many other species overwinter, but are less commonly seen. These include some species of sparrow, warbler, hawks, geese, cranes and swans. Two hundred and five bald eagles were surveyed on Sauvie Island this winter, a record number.



If you have woods or large trees, you may also get hawks (particularly red-tail) and owls, including great-horned or screech owls -- both helpful with rodent control. You

may even see the aggressive eastern Barred owl, which is outcompeting our native Spotted owl and other smaller native species. Large trees near water, including cottonwoods, attract bald eagles. Snags, or large dead trees, do the same and also serve as a winter source of insect food. You may see kestrels on powerlines, fence lines and the tops of bird houses and maybe even a peregrine falcon or cormorants along the Multnomah Channel.

Certain native plants are particularly helpful to over-wintering birds. Oregon grape, for example, may have flowers in winter and snowberry has persistent fruit, offering food into the cold month to towhees, thrushes and robins. Similar shrubs provide structure for perching and cover from predators; and native nut-producing trees like Oregon white oak and hazel produce high protein food that lasts into winter. Scrub jays are known to take advantage of the latter. The increasingly rare Oregon white oak supports nuthatches, which may also visit your feeders in winter. Conifer trees provide great winter cover for birds and their sap will support Sapsucker woodpeckers, which may be followed by hummingbirds.

Other ways to protect your avian friends in winter include hanging one or more hummingbird feeders and keeping them stocked, cleaned and unfrozen, as well as providing an unfrozen water source. Pouring hot water into a bird bath is one strategy for the latter. Lastly, minimizing use of insecticide and rodenticide helps insure a healthy supply of food for perching and prey birds.

2015 Forest Thinning

We improved forest health on more than 40 acres in 2015 making it our most productive year since our forestry program began in 2010. We helped manage selective harvest, or thinning, projects on 41 acres where we've also controlled invasive weeds and will plant native plants to increase diversity.



The thinning projects included 26 acres off Logie Trail Road, 2 acres on Skyline, and 2 projects totaling 13 acres on McNamee Road. All four projects had several things in common:

- Tree canopies were greatly reduced in size and vigor due to overcrowding.
- The forest floor had very little fern and wildflower cover due to the dense canopy not allowing light to the forest floor.
- The thinning work was “pre-commercial” meaning that the trees are too small to sell as saw logs, so the felled trees were bucked (cut into pieces) and piled – which

adds great habitat for wildlife.

- Trained crews completed the projects over a total of 1,652 hours! We're excited that our restoration work offers quality employment to these contractors.

This work can become expensive, so financial assistance is important to most landowners. As demand for this work is increasing in our District, we're finding ways to leverage our funds to get more done. In 2015 we received about \$20,000 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In the coming years, we're working on more NRCS funding as well as grant money from Oregon Department of Forestry.

Forest thinning benefits woodland properties that have dense Douglas-fir plantations as well as properties that are crowded with dense maple, alder, cherry, and other species. This latter situation often occurs after logging where a variety of hardwood trees and shrubs outcompete the planted conifers. If either of these examples describe your property, contact our Forest Conservationist Michael Ahr at michael@wmswcd.org or 503-238-4775, ext. 109.

To read about our 26 acre thinning off of Logie Trail Road in more detail, click here. <https://wmswcd.org/projects/logie-trail-forest-thinning/>

Stormwater Management

December went on record as the all-time wettest month ever recorded at the airport, according to an article in the Oregonian (12/21/15).

With the rain still coming and rainfall related events such as flooding and landslides continuing to threaten homes, many residents are paying close attention to where their stormwater goes and how it impacts their land (and their neighbors downstream). When it rains, stormwater runs over our rooftops, driveways, lawns and other surfaces and eventually into nearby streams and rivers. Changes in land use that increase impervious (or impermeable) surfaces can lead to flooding, erosion, habitat degradation and water quality.



Landslides and flooding problems usually require a professional engineering plan to protect property and human health. As a landowner, even in our steep west hills, you can take some simple steps to mitigate the impact of stormwater runoff through the infiltration or evaporation of rain water (before it becomes runoff). For ideas and details on steps you can take, including planting a tree, restoring your soil or

depaving an area, visit: <http://www.wmswcd.org/programs/stormwater-programs/>.

Muddy Forest Roads?

In the Tualatin Mountains we have hundreds of small streams. Many almost go unnoticed most of the year, but during heavy rain they become torrents of rushing water flowing down our hillsides. With this rapid flow, a great deal of sediment, branches, and larger pieces of wood are swept downstream and often deposited on our forest roads or into culverts. A plugged culvert can be very



damaging because the water has to go somewhere. If it can't get through the culvert, it will overflow and end up on the road surface where it erodes the road bed and the banks on the downstream side of the road. The road itself can be severely damaged, or completely washed out. In some cases we find the culvert hundreds of feet downstream after heavy rain.

What can you do? During the event when the water is rushing downhill, stay away from the culvert. It's not safe to act until after the water subsides, usually within a couple days of less rainfall. Once the water is at a normal level, clean out the culvert. You can simply climb down to the inlet and clear away dirt and debris with your hands or a shovel. Note, this would be a great practice to plan for every fall before the heavy rain is expected.

Despite our best efforts, sometimes damage still occurs. Contact Forest Conservationist Michael Ahr at michael@wmswcd.org or 503-238-4775, ext. 109 for a site visit to take a look at your forest roads.

Meadowscaping

We are pleased to announce that our new Meadowscaping Handbook will be available to residents this coming spring! "Meadowscaping" is the practice of designing, planting, and managing an urban meadow to provide ecological functions and benefits such as pollinator habitat and stormwater improvement. Meadowscaping is an alternative to managing a lawn, which is a monoculture of grass. Meadowscaping, with a diversity of native prairie plants, is a practice adapted to the local climate and soil conditions as well as to the needs of native wildlife. This landscaping practice uses native plant species that are deep rooted and drought resistant, offers habitat



and forage for birds, pollinators, and beneficial insects, improves water infiltration and filters, and stores carbon (Zimmerman 2010 and Xerces Society 2013). This how-to publication will offer guidelines for planning, design, planting, and maintaining meadows on small urban plots less than 0.25 acres using plants native to the Willamette Valley. Check our website mid-April for this new resource:
<http://www.wmswcd.org/programs/pacific-northwest-urban-meadowscaping/>.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Intern

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District is delighted to welcome Danielle Jones as our new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Intern!

Danielle comes to the District with a strong background of working on social equity initiatives with communities of color and building partnerships to further equity work. As a graduate student in the Leadership for Sustainability Education program at Portland State University, she is learning about how to design leadership opportunities and ways to encourage learning about sustainability. Her cultural competency background coupled with a commitment to social equity and sustainability issues made her a great match for this internship.



Danielle is working with staff, board members and community partners to help support the District's Racial Equity initiatives through the collection of District demographic data, creation of data management and tracking systems, and community collaboration/partnership development.

Calendar

April 16, 2016, Saturday: Soil School, PCC Rock Creek Event Center, 8:00 am – 3:30 pm. Registration at www.wmswcd.org under Events/Soil School.

April 27, 2016, Wednesday: How to Stabilize Your River or Canal Banks, time/location TBA

Spring, 2016 – Watch our website for dates for Urban Watershed Mentors Training this spring!

Spring, 2016 – Watch our website for Weed Watcher Training dates as well!

We hope to see you at an upcoming workshop or training,

Jim Cathcart

District Manager