



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

Year of Challenge
2019 - 2020 Annual Report



Message from Jim Cathcart, District Manager

Oh what a year it has been! Last year in my annual message, I stated that July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 (the period covered by this Annual Report) was the first year of our future. Things began on a high note as we celebrated 75 years as a district and launched the development of our new strategic plan. We initiated discussion about the history of institutional racism within our district with release of the paper, "Whose Land is Our Land? Spatial Exclusion, Racial Segregation, and the History of the Lands of Western Multnomah County." But things took a tumultuous turn with the coronavirus pandemic and the tragic killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Jayne Thompson. Physical distancing, essential workers, Black Lives Matter, distance learning, calls for police accountability, and the need to address Oregon's tragic wildfire situation are the new normal.



The staff and Board of the West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District – under the leadership of Board Chair Terri Preeg Riggsby and Interim Co-District Managers Mary Logalbo and Michele Levis – weathered these challenges and the District is stronger than ever as a result. We have successfully transitioned to a remote work environment, developed COVID-19 safety protocols, publically stated our support for Black Lives Matter, and deepened discussions about racial equity, gender, and environmental justice. We are also dusting off previous discussions about addressing wildfire risk within our communities.

We do not do this alone and rely on the support of those who live, work, and recreate in the district, along with communities and partner organizations. The pages that follow highlight our work on oak prairie habitat restoration and place-based environmental education, as well as feature an associate member of our Board, Jan Hamer. You will also find our financial report, an update on our strategic plan, a list of our accomplishments, a map of all of our projects from the year, and a call out to this year's awardees. The year 2020 – setting the framework for how we work today and into the future.

Mission

The mission of the West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District is to conserve and protect soil and water resources for people, wildlife, and the environment.

Our Services

The District is committed to working with all people to provide conservation education and technical assistance for farms, woodlands, organizations, schools, community centers, residences, and others who live, work, and recreate in the District. We specialize in conservation planning, invasive weed prevention and control, native plant restoration, livestock management, soil conservation, forestry assistance, and fish and wildlife habitat enhancement to create social, economic, and environmental benefits for all communities. We serve Multnomah County west and north of the Willamette River, all of Sauvie Island, and a portion of the Bonny Slope region of the Tualatin Mountains in Washington County.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement Summary

The West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District believes all people deserve improved quality of life through healthy soil, clean water, and diverse habitats. We seek to welcome, engage, and better serve communities of color and other historically marginalized groups in all facets of our organization, activities, and programs. By working proactively and deliberately to be equitable and inclusive, we will be more successful in our work. Our goal is to become fully equitable and inclusive by holding ourselves accountable, utilizing an equity lens, addressing disparities, and sharing our experiences in this pursuit. Our full racial equity statement can be found here: [Tinyurl.com/WMSWCD-Equity-Statement](https://tinyurl.com/WMSWCD-Equity-Statement)

Statement of Non-discrimination

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District does not discriminate based on any class or identity including age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status. The District is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. The District makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities and special needs to provide access to District events, materials and services. If you have requests for accommodations or complaints about discrimination, harassment, inequitable treatment, lack of access to District events, materials or services, or for any questions at all, please contact us at info@wmswcd.org or call 503.238.4775.



Board of Directors

Terri Preeg Riggsby
Chair, Director, Zone 5

George Sowder
Vice-Chair, Director, Zone 3

Shawn Looney
Secretary, Director, At-large Position 2

Weston Miller
Treasurer, Director, At-large Position 2

Kim Peterson
Director, Zone 1

Jane Hartline
Director, Zone 2

Brian Lightcap
Director, Zone 4

Associate Directors

Finlay Anderson

Jan Hamer

Susan Weedall

Bob Wiley, Sr.

Effective April 28, 2020, Associate Director Susan Weedall stepped down after moving out of the District. Susan contributed greatly to our work and was an active participant in our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative. Susan will be missed and we thank her for her 5 years of service.

Staff

Jim Cathcart
District Manager

Michael Ahr
Forest Conservationist

Cole Carr
GIS & Field Conservationist Intern, 2020

Michelle Delepine
Conservationist & Invasive Species Program Coordinator

Ari DeMarco
Seasonal Conservation Technician

Scott Gall
Rural Conservationist

Indi Keith
Field Conservationist Intern, 2019

Kammy Kern-Korot
Senior Conservationist

Sam Mularz
GIS & Field Conservationist Intern, 2019

Michele Levis
Controller and Budget Officer

Mary Logalbo
Urban Conservationist

Renee Magyar
Communications & Outreach Manager

Randi Razalenti
Office Manager

Hannah Spencer
Field Conservationist Intern, 2020

Laura Taylor
Conservationist & Education Coordinator





Featured Project - West Hills Resident Works with WMSWCD to Create Oak Savanna

It often takes time for someone to decide they're ready to tackle a habitat restoration project, especially one with many moving parts and a long-term commitment to maintenance, but Ashley Offensend was enthusiastic from the get-go. Ashley had seen an article we published in the Skyline Ridge Runner in early 2016 about ways to restore our increasingly rare Oregon white oak habitat and he was immediately interested. He proactively reached out to the conservation district about improving habitat on his 20 acres of forest and former pasture and was persistent in his interest. He followed up with Multnomah County on information we shared about tax incentive options and secured a special assessment for "Open Space," that allows him to manage his land for natural resource values.



In 2017, we surveyed the land and developed a conservation plan to convert 10 acres of pasture to native oak savanna. That fall, we began removal of blackberry followed by native grass seeding on 2 acres of steep slope. We applied to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to tap our newly developed oak habitat restoration funding pool; the project was ranked highly and was awarded a contract in early 2018. In fall of 2018, we applied for and received a grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). These two sources provided \$30,000 toward project costs.

We worked hard throughout 2018 inventorying plants, completing site analysis and paperwork required for funding, and developing the specifications for how the various aspects of the project would be implemented. With the help of paid crews and the Offensends' own labor, we continued to get the site ready for new native plants. The full scope of the project includes:

- managing invasive weeds like shiny geranium, herb Robert, teasel, Canada thistle, poison hemlock, blackberry, spurge laurel, holly and English hawthorn
- converting a third-acre of former pasture to a native plant hedgerow to benefit pollinators, removing grass and adding mulch
- planting native trees and shrubs on the property's steep slope
- planting clusters of oak trees to create the open grass savanna interspersed with oaks
- establishing native wildflowers in meadow patches and in the hedgerow via seed and small plants from a native plant nursery
- mounting bluebird boxes in the savanna, and
- constructing wildlife rock- and brush-piles at the forest edge, where invasive blackberry cover was removed.

2019 and 2020 saw the continuation of weed control and the beginning of planting. Crews installed nearly 5,000 native shrubs and trees of 15 different species this past winter, and we will add another 1,500 plants this fall. Trees species include Oregon white oak, madrone, and Willamette Valley ponderosa pine – all drought tolerant and fire resilient – along with Scouler willow, and native species of hawthorne, cherry, crabapple, and hazelnut. We're also seeding over 3 dozen native wildflower and grass species.

The OWEB grant expires this year, but the NRCS funding continues through 2022. The Offensends will maintain the planted areas into the future and gradually increase coverage of native wildflowers where there was previously pasture. The multi-year and multi-faceted project has been an effective collaboration of partners that depends on the passion of Ashley and his family. Their commitment to care for rare and declining Oregon white oak savanna gives us confidence that we have made a lasting and meaningful impact on our native landscape.

below: Elk graze in Offensend's future savanna, photo courtesy of Ashley Offensend



above: Crews plant cuttings for a native hedgerow, photo by WMSWCD

below: After many years, Offensend's newly planted Oregon white oak (Quercus garryana) trees should look something like this tree on Sauvie Island, photo by Erica J. Mitchell



School, Community & Demonstration Garden Funding Program Feature – The Cottonwood School of Civics and Science

Cottonwood School of Civics and Science is a small K-8 public charter school located in a leased warehouse with a small outdoor patio space for their school yard and views of nearby Southwest Waterfront skyscrapers. Given these urban constraints, their successful environmental and place-based education program is a wonder and a testament to their creative ingenuity.

When Cottonwood began working with West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District in the 2018-19 school year, they had a vision of expanding their students' everyday connection to plants and food. They had a small playground and nature play area with fun climbing structures, rocks, and logs, and a small patio mostly devoid of plant life. They got started in their first year by getting some low-to-the-ground rolling vegetable planters established on the patio. These proved ideal for allowing smaller children to reach the garden, while maintaining flexibility with the arrangement and use of their small patio space. The students also planted two "sensory gardens" in planter boxes near the playground – one with plants of different textures, and the other with plants that smell good. During class, students learned about plant biology, pollination, and gardening, and otherwise interacted with the garden spaces during recess.



This past school year of 2019-20 was a study in adaptation and transformation for Cottonwood's students. They expanded the number of vegetable planters in their garden, enabling more grade levels to engage in garden education. Seventh graders studied the transformative process of composting last fall and initiated a pilot project to test the feasibility of a school-wide composting system. Our Conservationist and Education Coordinator, Laura Taylor, taught them about good composting practices, and then they tested composting in their classroom and made recommendations to the school based on their findings. We were delighted and entertained by the mention in their report to us that they "discovered that emptying the compost each week kept the classroom from smelling and is easier to remember."

This spring, the unexpected sweeping changes to school life caused by COVID-19 gave classes the opportunity to learn about adaptation through the lens of garden education. Kindergarten students studied the way plants in their yards grew and changed throughout the spring. Seventh and eighth graders learned about the history of victory gardens from World War II to today – gardens planted originally during wartime to supplement public food supply and to boost morale – and then figured out how to make resourceful use of recycled materials and the outdoor spaces around their home to grow their own herbs from seed. With a deepened connection to plants, students developed a greater appreciation for the value of growing food and helping support those facing food insecurity in their community.



Cottonwood's teachers and staff have demonstrated an admirable ability to solve problems creatively over this challenging year. The way they model this adaptability to their students through garden education is helping Cottonwood's students grow as resiliently as the victory gardens they have planted.

Reaching Out to Communities to Plan for Our Future

In May of 2019, we began an update to our Long Range Business Plan (LRBP). This strategic planning document will guide the scope of the District's conservation work and the necessary financial sustainability and organizational health to implement this work for the next 5 years (2021-2025), with the aim of embedding equity and inclusion as a foundational value in all that we do.

We reached out to community members, program participants, organizational partners, staff, and board to gather a diversity of perspectives that will help inform planning for our organization's future. This outreach included:

- 160 historically underserved community members were surveyed by 8 hired Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) comprised of leaders, translating as needed, within the following communities: African, African American, Arabic, Chinese, Latinx, Native American, Slavic, and Vietnamese.
- 32 partner & community organization interviews
- 183 online and in-person surveys
- Staff and Board online surveys and follow-up discussions
- Partner and community meeting discussions

Through these efforts, the following overarching themes and findings surfaced:

- Lack of awareness of our District and knowledge of conservation issues is the greatest threat and barrier to effectively getting our work done.
- There is a need for more conservation education with clear, straightforward (simple), and non-technical language.
- Clean water or water quality remains a top concern.
- Climate change, air quality, soil health, and access to land are priority issues, especially for historically underserved community members.
- Wildlife habitat and connectivity are important for partners and online survey respondents, but less so for community members that responded to CELs surveys.
- Invasive species management is recognized as a sensitive topic with varying perspectives from stakeholders.
- Increasing pressures of development and urbanization along with threats to wildlife habitat and watershed health are of concern to many that we surveyed.

During fall and early winter of 2020, we will continue to work with the CELs and a newly formed advisory committee comprised of community members, community leaders, and partners to continue to center on community concerns, especially those historically and presently underserved, as we craft our plan for the future.



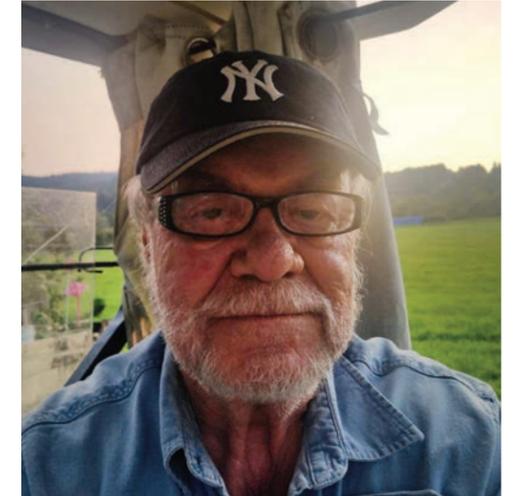


Featured Board Member – Jan Hamer

For the past 5 years, Jan Hamer has served as a valued Associate Director. Associate Directors are non-voting members of our Board that bring specific expertise and added perspective. Jan has brought an array of skillsets to the District ranging from conservation expertise to organizational development. This year, Jan stepped up to serve as an active and engaged co-chair on a committee charged with ensuring the District’s organizational health through our Long Range Business Plan update.

Over the years, Jan has enriched District projects, with his wetlands and wildlands conservation experience coupled with his unique perspective as a floating home moorage owner and business manager. Jan’s experience with the management of dynamic systems along low-lying lands along rivers, partially learned through observation and management of his own Multnomah Channel property, enriched planning efforts for the Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project. Jan’s floating home connections helped us develop and distribute our guide for floating home owners and marina managers called “Living on the Water.” In addition, Jan called on his past business management experience when he actively participated on staff hiring teams.

Through Jan’s most recent work on our Long Range Business Plan update, we’ve seen his commitment to the District’s overall success, including our equity initiatives, clearly demonstrated. Jan’s past experience in human resources and overall organizational management has been critical to thinking through how we will maintain the District’s ability to function effectively and efficiently, to cope adequately, to change appropriately, and to grow from within. We look forward to continued organizational health with dedicated board members like Jan amongst our leadership team.



Financial Summary

Balance Sheet - Governmental Funds June 30, 2020

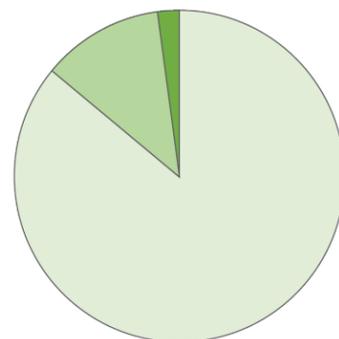
Assets:	
Cash and Investments	\$1,227,989
Accounts Receivable	28,185
Property Taxes Receivable	47,512
Total Assets	<u>1,303,686</u>
Liabilities:	
Accounts Payable	118,037
Accrued Liabilities	2,869
Total Liabilities	<u>120,906</u>
Deferred Inflows of Resources:	
Deferred Property Tax Revenue	32,734
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	<u>32,734</u>
Fund Balances:	
Assigned for Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project	89,696
Unassigned	1,060,350
Total Fund Balances	<u>1,150,046</u>
Total Liabilities, Deferred Inflows of Resources and Fund Balances	<u>\$1,303,686</u>

Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balances - Governmental Funds For the Year Ended June 30, 2020

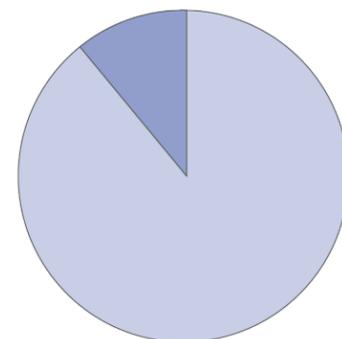
Revenues:	
Property Tax Levy	\$1,661,484
Federal, State, and Local Grants	225,564
Other Income	44,972
Total revenues	<u>1,932,020</u>
Expenditures:	
Conservation Programs and Support Services	1,847,290
Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project, including Capital Outlay	216,016
Total Expenditures	<u>2,063,306</u>
Change in Fund Balances	(131,286)
Fund Balance, Beginning of Year	1,281,332
Fund Balance, End of Year	<u>\$1,150,046</u>

The audit of our fiscal year 2019-2020 financial statements was in process at press time. The District fiscal year 2019-2020 Audit Report will be available at the District office before December 31, 2020.

- Property Tax Levy
- Federal, State, & Local Grants
- Other Income
- Conservation Programs & Support Services
- Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project, including Capital Outlay



REVENUES



EXPENDITURES



Photo by Erica J. Mitchell

Annual Awardees

Urban Cooperator - The Cottonwood School of Civics and Science, Sarah Anderson, Fieldwork and Place-based Education Coordinator

Rural Cooperator - Ashley Offensend

Non-profit Partner Award - Tryon Creek Watershed Council

Green Award - Ping Khaw & Community Engagement Liaisons



The Numbers in Review



12 conservation plans completed



31,311 linear feet of streams/banks enhanced



\$447,675 to on-the-ground projects



1,682 people served at outreach events



605 conservation implementation partners served



47 acres of cropland improved through soil health practices



87.5 acres treated for invasive plants



59 restoration sites monitored



145.7 acres of native habitat enhanced including acres thinned



1,417 people served by educational opportunities

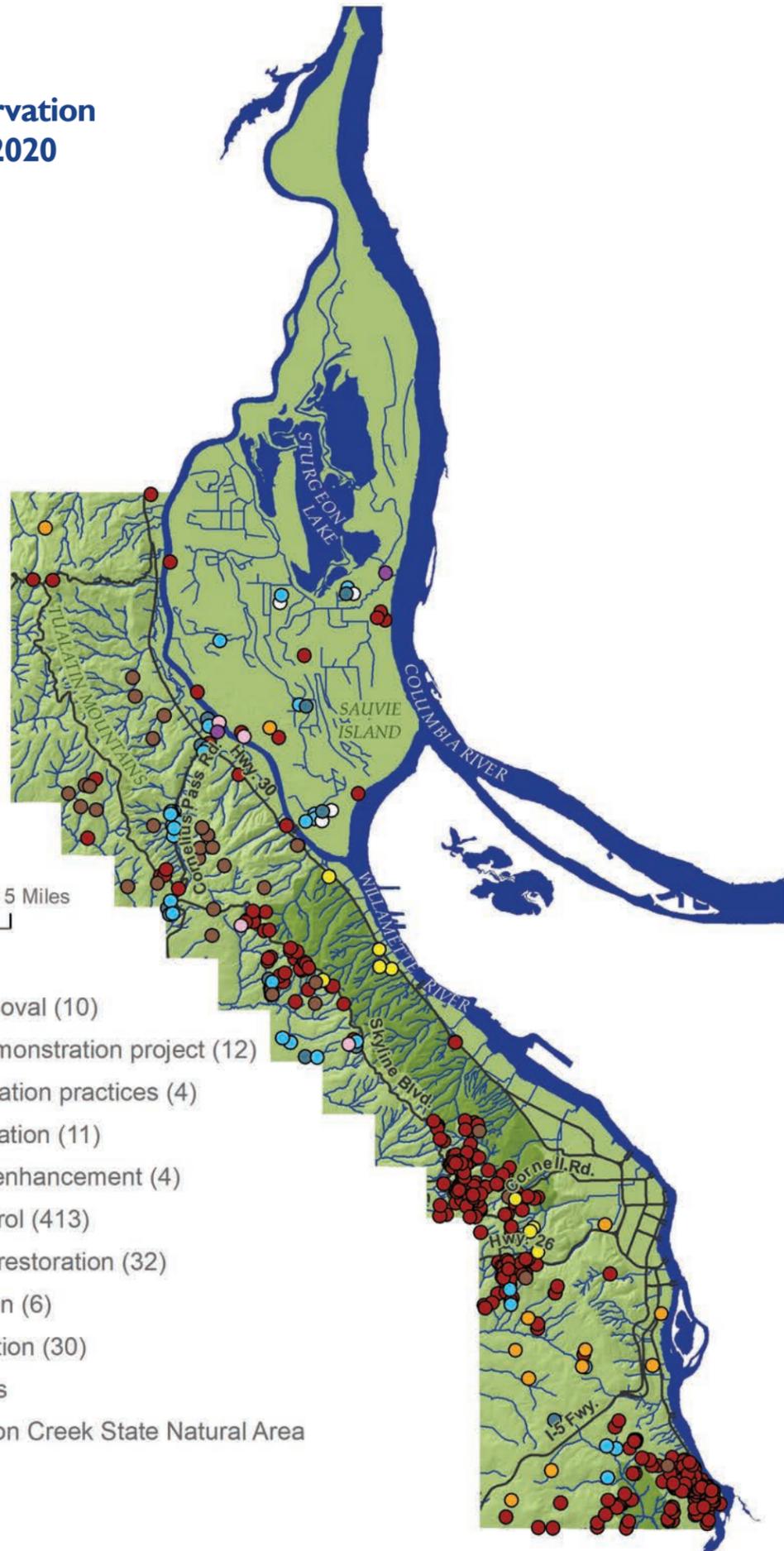
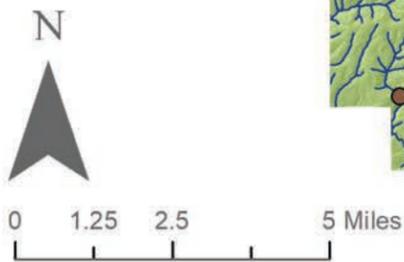


43,123 native plants installed



\$141,025 in support of partner projects

District Conservation Projects 2019-2020



- Project Type:
- Canopy weed removal (10)
 - Education and demonstration project (12)
 - Farmland conservation practices (4)
 - Oak habitat restoration (11)
 - Pollinator habitat enhancement (4)
 - Priority weed control (413)
 - Stream and pond restoration (32)
 - Wetland restoration (6)
 - Woodland restoration (30)
 - ~ Streams and rivers
 - Forest Park & Tryon Creek State Natural Area

<u>Project Type</u>	<u>Description</u>
Canopy weed removal	Projects include sites where partners, with support from WMSWCD, have removed invasive ivy or clematis from trees.
Education and demonstration projects	Projects help schools and communities develop and care for edible and native habitat gardens and expand environmental education opportunities.
Farmland conservation practices	Projects may involve cover-cropping and other soil health practices that help farmers and livestock owners build healthy soil, promote beneficial pollinators and other wildlife, and conserve and protect water.
Oak habitat restoration	Projects aim to enhance or restore Oregon white oak woodlands and savanna, and can involve weed control; planting of oaks and associated trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers; wildlife habitat structures; and removal of competing Douglas fir.
Pollinator habitat enhancement	Projects include establishing native plant hedgerows and other habitat features that provide nectar, pollen, and nesting resources for native bees and other pollinators throughout the growing season.
Priority weed control	Projects include sites where high priority invasive species such as garlic mustard and knotweed were found and controlled through the Early Detection-Rapid Response (EDRR) program.
Stream and pond restoration	Projects include controlling invasive blackberry, reed canary grass, or other invasive weeds along streams and around ponds, and planting native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants to help shade streams, improve water quality, stem bank erosion, and improve habitat.
Wetland restoration	Projects involve significant wetland restoration which may include earth moving to improve hydrology, controlling weeds, and restoring native vegetation.
Woodland restoration	Projects may include treating invasive weeds, addressing erosion concerns, planting trees and shrubs on forested land, and thinning trees to reduce competition.



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

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