



Annual Report

This year has been full of unforeseen and unique challenges as well as opportunities to come together to help each other in new ways. We here at the Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) have strived to continue to provide services to community members. Our core mission is to: *provide educational, technical, and financial assistance to our community for the protection, conservation, and restoration of natural resources.*

Our values include:

- Engaging in a voluntary, collaborative, local, non-regulatory approach to solving problems;
- Understanding the importance of a healthy environment to the economy of our area;
- Recognizing the open space and other environmental benefits provided by agriculture and forest landowners;
- Respecting property rights, confidentiality, and the decisions of landowners;
- Contributing to partnerships and the sharing of resources through collaborative relationships;

- Utilizing education as a means to promote environmental stewardship; and
- Making conservation and fiscal responsibility part of our daily mission.

Over the long term we want to see water conserved, water quality protected, thriving native plant communities, a community that embraces stewardship of land and water, and farmers remaining in farming.

We can't do any of this without you. We thank each and every one of you for your support over this past year, and look forward to opening our doors to the public again soon (although we can still be reached via phone and email)!

~Heather Hendrixson & Kris Schaedel~



Confused as to Who's Who?

Conservation District. Watershed Group. The distinction between the two organizations may be confusing given our close working relationship, shared office space, and overlapping priorities. The SWCD was established to promote and enhance the county's natural resources with a particular focus on agricultural and working lands. Also, the SWCD is the fiscal and employment sponsor of the Watershed Group. The Watershed Group is the designated watershed council for the Hood River Basin, established to protect and restore native fish populations and watershed health. Each organization has its own vision, mission, and decision making process. Check out what Cindy and Alix have been up to this past year in the Watershed Group insert of this annual report.

Technical Assistance Round-Up

In the last year we fielded over 100 phone calls, engaged with 36 walk-in clients, went out on 24 site visits, exchanged over 40 emails, and followed up with technical guides and additional information for landowners and land managers. We also assisted over 200 people during our annual plant sale. The Hood River SWCD is always available to help county residents become better stewards of their land, free of charge.



SWCD office in fall

HOOD RIVER SWCD

"To provide educational, technical, and financial assistance to our community for the protection, conservation, and restoration of natural resources."

Financial Report

Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

The Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a legal subdivision of state government and receives funds to administer its programs from Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs (CTWS), East Fork Irrigation District (EFID), Middle Fork Irrigation District (MFID), Farmers Irrigation District (FID), Dee Irrigation District (DID), the US Forest Service (USFS), and others. The SWCD is governed by a locally elected, volunteer Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors meets on the first Thursday of each month from 4 - 6 pm. Meetings have been held via Zoom since May.

Meetings are open to the public. For information or agendas, contact us by phone or email. Once our offices open again to the public, stop by at 3007 Experiment Station Road, Hood River. Office hours are Monday-Friday, from 8 am to 4 pm.

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. A request for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodations for persons with disabilities should be made at least 48 hours before the meeting by calling 541-386-4588.

Directors

Brian Nakamura, Chair, At-large
Rick Ragan, Vice-Chair, At-Large
Cindy Collins, Secretary/Treasurer, Zone 2
Pete Siragusa, Zone 1
Ben Saur, Zone 3

Associate Directors

Chuck Gehling
Larry Martin
Richard Larson

SWCD Staff

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541-386-4588 heather@hoodriverswcd.org

Kris Schaedel, Conservation Specialist
541-386-4588 kris@hoodriverswcd.org

Watershed Group Staff

Cindy Thieman, Watershed Coordinator
541-386-6063 cindy@hoodriverwatershed.org

Alix Danielsen, Restoration & Outreach Project Mgr.
541-386-6063 alix@hoodriverwatershed.org

Beginning Fund Balance: \$113,986

REVENUES:

Intergovernmental	
ODA grants	83,315
OWEB grants	291,552
PSP Sampling	5,050
OWRD grants	5,038
USFS grants	61,486
Other grants	28,739

Contracts

Irrigation District support	38,000
CTWS support	35,899
Miscellaneous	1,518

Earnings on Investments	674
Tree sales	11,653

TOTAL REVENUES: \$562,924

EXPENDITURES:

Salaries and Benefits	211,410
Professional Fees	12,784
Materials and Services	32,443
Tree and Plant Sale	5,112
Projects	230,835

TOTAL EXPENDITURES: \$492,584

Ending Fund Balance: \$184,324

A Reflection

In recent months, we have been reflecting on our intentions and actions as a conservation district, as employees, and as individuals. The SWCD has always had a policy on non-discrimination, however, policies can often fall short when it comes to implementation. We are taking steps to examine our programs, policies, and procedures related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It has always been our goal to make conservation and our programs accessible for all in our community, and we will continue to work towards this goal. We are committed to improving ourselves and our organization and will be taking steps to make our work more inclusive within our community. We welcome your ideas and feedback.

Getting Restoration on the Ground with OWEB Small Grants



With the implementation of five new OWEB small grant projects in 2019-2020, over 26 acres of orchard land have been upgraded to more efficient irrigation systems, and livestock operations have been improved to better manage mud and keep animals out of waterways. The three upgraded irrigation systems will use an average of 55% less water than the systems they replaced. Orchardists will use flow meters and soil moisture sensors on the upgraded orchards to monitor irrigation effectiveness and help schedule irrigations. Efficient systems combined with good irrigation water management will maximize water conservation. The two livestock projects provided landowners with hardened paddock footings, riparian fencing, and off-channel watering facilities. These projects will reduce sediment and nutrient runoff into streams.

These projects are funded through the OWEB Small Grant Program, which provides \$100,000 in Oregon Lottery funds to the Hood River Small Grant Team each biennium. In the last year, the \$54,988 in OWEB Small Grant funds spent in Hood River County were matched by \$26,686 in local funding.

The Hood River Small Grant Team is made up of representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, the Hood River Watershed Group, and the Hood River SWCD and is assisted by local and state stakeholders and natural resource agency personnel.

Landowners or land managers can apply for up to \$15,000 in Small Grant funding to implement watershed restoration projects on their land. Eligible projects include irrigation system upgrades, streamside livestock fencing, manure storage facilities, culvert replacements, riparian plantings, and other on-the-ground restoration projects. For more information about this program or to develop a project proposal, contact the SWCD.



Hood River Pesticide Stewardship Partnership



The SWCD has been working with landowners for 21 years to reduce pesticide levels in local waterways through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP). PSPs are a voluntary, collaborative approach to management and involve: 1) monitoring for pesticides in surface waters, 2) identifying streams with elevated pesticide concentrations or high numbers of detections, 3) collaborating with pesticide users to implement voluntary Best Management Practices, and 4) follow-up monitoring to determine improvements over time. The PSP program is funded by Oregon Department of Agriculture and there are currently nine PSP programs throughout the state.

In Hood River in 2019, ten rounds of water samples were taken by SWCD staff at five sites: East/West Fork Neal Creek, Lower Neal Creek, Lenz Creek, and Odell Creek. All samples were analyzed for over 130 herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and breakdown products (degradates).

Eight different pesticide analytes (one insecticide and seven herbicides) were detected in the water samples. All of the detections were less than 10% of the EPA aquatic life benchmark (very low concentrations!). Aquatic life benchmarks are estimates of the concentrations below which pesticides are not expected to represent a risk to aquatic life. The PSP Program in the Hood River Valley highlights the benefits and successes of good spray practices by farmers and other landowners.

Landowners and managers can continue to do their part to minimize pesticide pollution by: 1) applying, storing, and disposing of pesticides according to the label, 2) using pesticides as part of a multi-pronged approach to pest control, with pesticides as the last resort, 3) using the least toxic pesticide possible to address the problem, and 4) maintaining healthy vegetation corridors along streams and ditches to help filter out any chemical laden runoff.

Agricultural Water Quality in Hood River

Preventing pollution from reaching our streams and rivers is critical to the economic, cultural, and social identity in Hood River. The Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Agricultural Water Quality Program focuses on voluntary and cooperative efforts by landowners and other entities to protect water quality.

ODA is the state agency required to regulate water pollution from agricultural activities as directed by the 1993 Agricultural Water Quality Management Act. ODA utilizes the Water Quality Management Area Plan and Rules to prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities. A local advisory committee made up of Hood River stakeholders helped ODA develop the Area Rules in 2001. This group will be updating the Plan this year (December 2020). The plan highlights projects and activities undertaken by the community to protect water quality and serves as a framework for landowners to achieve water quality goals. The SWCD receives funding from ODA to help landowners voluntarily put the program into practice.



As part of this program, the SWCD chooses smaller watersheds within the larger Hood River Basin to concentrate efforts for several years at a time. These "Focus Areas" help with documenting the effectiveness of water quality improvement programs. Primary focuses of this program include: upgrading irrigation systems, planting riparian vegetation, fencing livestock out of waterways, and providing off-channel watering facilities. Whiskey Creek is the current Focus Area. The SWCD has contacted agricultural landowners in the Whiskey Creek Watershed to offer voluntary assistance to prevent and control water pollution. If you live in the Whiskey Creek Watershed and have an idea for an improvement project, please contact us. There are funds and materials available to help you.

The Area Plan and Rules describe desired conditions on agricultural land and detail the Best Management Practices that landowners can use to prevent water pollution.

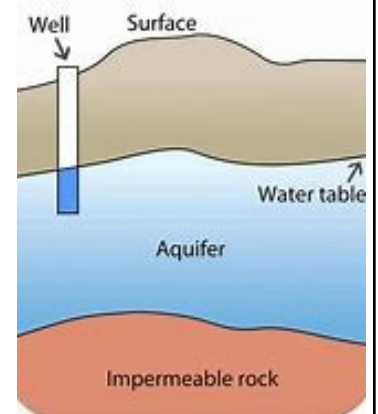
The Area Plan and Rules are available online at
www.hoodriverswcd.org/resources

The Plan will be updated this December—join in the review by contacting us!

Groundwater is water that exists in saturated zones beneath the land surface. Most of the water being used in the Hood River Valley comes from surface water (groundwater is rarely used for irrigation here). As glaciers melt and surface water supply gets stretched thin during late summer months, tapping into groundwater may become more desirable. But what are the current conditions of groundwater resources in the Hood River Valley? How will new development and climate change impact groundwater conditions? The SWCD is working with Hood River County and the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to find out.

The SWCD monitors approximately 15 wells and OWRD monitors another 20 wells quarterly throughout the valley. There is now over eight years of well data that is managed by OWRD. Monitoring efforts have shown groundwater levels to be stable with small seasonal fluctuations.

With support from the county, the SWCD will continue monitoring groundwater for the next six years. This long term data will be needed for future modelling work, and for assessing trends related to climate change and future groundwater development.





This year in Hood River County, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) secured funds for various types of projects. Funds were awarded to the

East Fork Irrigation District and Mt. Hood Irrigation District's On-Farm Irrigation Strategy, the East Cascades Forest Health Initiative, the National Air Quality Initiative, the Pollinator and Beneficial Insects for Mid-Columbia Basin Fruit Crops Strategy, and the East Fork Watershed Restoration Project.

With just over \$1.13M in funds (more than twice the amount obligated last year!), 21 contracts were signed with local landowners. 121 acres of smudge pots were removed, 3,815 feet of pipeline was installed, 145 acres of micro irrigation system was installed, 144 acres of irrigation water management was applied, 240 feet of hedgerow was planted, and 1.4 acres of woody residue treatment was applied.

The SWCD did the heavy lifting to draft a new Implementation Strategy for 2021 for on-farm irrigation upgrades for East Fork Irrigation District's Dukes Valley and Main Canal customers.

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) funding is still available for these programs! For information on EQIP and other NRCS programs, contact District Conservationist Carly Heron at 541-352-1037.

NRCS is thrilled to announce the arrival of a new planner in the Hood River office. Emily Huth studied forestry and soils at Virginia Tech. Her work in VA with NRCS was diverse, from small homesteader farms to large beef/dairy operations. She then transitioned to Sherman County, OR where large dryland wheat and range projects were a large focus. She states that she is "looking forward to eventually meeting and working with everyone".



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Hood River Watershed Action Plan **In Final Planning Stage**

The Hood River SWCD has been actively participating in a collaborative planning process to develop a Strategic Action Plan for the Hood River watershed (called "Watershed 2040", read more about it in the Watershed Group's insert) to guide conservation work for the next 20 years. This planning effort is being led by the Hood River Watershed Group with funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and assistance from Bonneville Power Administration. Project partners, including tribes, irrigation districts, federal and state natural resource agencies, and others have been meeting for several years and the Watershed Group is in the final stages of writing the plan. High priority actions include fish habitat restoration, irrigation delivery infrastructure, on-farm water conservation, irrigation water management, and more.

Specific actions identified by the SWCD and prioritized in the Action Plan include assisting farmers with up-grading irrigation systems and implementing irrigation water management, identifying stream segments needing riparian buffers and assisting landowners in riparian planting projects, water quality sampling, and leading workshops, field tours, and other educational events.

This plan will help guide our work into the future, and taken collectively, leads to improved conditions for Hood River's farms, fish, and economy (a triple win!)

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB)

Now found throughout Hood River County, the brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*) was accidentally introduced to the U.S. from Asia in the late 1990s and has since spread across Oregon. It is an agricultural pest to fruit, vegetable, and grain crops and uses its piercing mouthparts to suck plant juices, preferring fruit, pods, and seeds. It can also be a pest to homeowners as it seeks overwintering habitat in homes. It can be identified by white bands on its antennae, smooth shoulders, and mottled brown coloration. Researchers are studying natural enemies to the BMSB and the use of habitat manipulation and traps as ways to control this unwanted invader.



Garlic Mustard

The SWCD completed its tenth year of garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) treatment and surveys in the upper Hood River Valley this summer. The site continues to be the only



known patch in the county and remains a high priority. We continue to focus our efforts on garlic mustard because this weed is extremely efficient at altering an ecosystem. It can live in sun or shade, wet or dry conditions, and seeds are viable in the soil for upwards of ten years. Once established, garlic mustard becomes a monoculture, effectively eliminating the biodiversity of forests and open lands. It even inhib-

its the regeneration of forests. The infestation, if left unchecked, threatens the Mt. Hood National Forest and surrounding agricultural lands. The SWCD continues to contain the infestation and decrease the density of plants. In 2020, we surveyed over 315 acres and hand-pulled 54 acres of garlic mustard. An estimated 1,365 gallons of garlic mustard was removed and disposed of properly. The SWCD has secured funding through 2022 to continue these efforts.

Is Your Forest Healthy?

NRCS has funds available for Hood River and Wasco County landowners to improve forest health. Healthy forests help prevent loss from catastrophic fires. Healthy forests also reduce the spread of disease and insect pests while improving wildlife habitat. Forest stands can be improved by mimicking natural wildfire regimes. Management practices include mechanical thinning and fuels reduction of overstocked and insect infested stands. These practices also lead to increased soil stability and better water quality.

Submit an application by contacting NRCS District Conservationist Carly Heron at 541-352-1037.



Weed of the Month

For the fifth year, the Hood River SWCD and partners continued the "Weed of the Month" outreach campaign. The project focused on a different weed each month from April through September. Informational posters were hung around the county, articles appeared in local newspapers, and public service announcements aired on the radio. Hopefully you saw the user friendly information on poison hemlock, puncturevine, tree of heaven, Italian arum, and Himalayan blackberry. Look for new posters and tips for controlling different weeds next year!

For more weed management and identification information, visit the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area website at: columbiagorgecwma.org.

Pollinators and Beneficial Insects



In March, the SWCD, in conjunction with NRCS, Oregon State University, and the Xerces Society, hosted a workshop to promote the conservation and management of pollinators and beneficial insects. Thirty small farmers, commercial fruit growers, and gardeners learned how to implement habitat improvements such as developing flowering meadows, hedge rows, and cover crops, and implementing pest control projects on their land. Attendees also learned about funding opportunities to help get these projects on the ground.

Building habitat for these hard working insects is easy and effective! Some simple steps to take to promote pollinators include:

- planting a variety of native flowering plants that sustain blooms throughout the season,
- providing nesting sites, and
- protecting flowering habitat from pesticide contamination.

For more information, check out the publications from the Xerces Society (xerces.org/pollinator-conservation).



Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District
Native Tree & Shrub Sale 2021

2019-2020

ORDER FORM

Conifer Trees - \$1.75 ea. QTY

Douglas Fir	
Grand Fir	
Noble Fir	
Western Red Cedar	
Ponderosa Pine	
Western Larch	
Giant Sequoia	
Western Hemlock	
White Pine	
Total Ordered:	

Name:
Address:
Phone Number:
Email Address:
How would you like to be contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Both

Deciduous Trees - \$2.75 QTY

Pacific Dogwood	
Quaking Aspen	
Blue Elderberry	
Vine Maple	
Beaked Hazelnut	
Big Leaf Maple	
Oregon Ash	
Paper Birch	
Silk Tassel	
Total Ordered:	

**Orders will be available for pick up:
Friday April 2nd, 9am-5pm
& Saturday April 3rd, 9am-1pm**

More information about each species can be found at:
hoodriverswcd.org

These are bare root seedlings. Please be prepared to plant them soon after pick up! All orders are subject to plant availability. Customers will be notified if shortages occur. Please be sure to provide relevant contact information. Orders are filled in the order they are received and must be paid in full with order.

Shrubs - \$2.75 ea. QTY

Showy Milkweed (rhizomes)	
Camas (bulbs)	
Redstem Ceanothus	
Low Oregon Grape	
Twinberry	
Snowbrush*	
American Cranberry	
Nootka Rose	
Snowberry*	
Douglas Spirea	
Mock Orange	
Oceanspray	
Indian Plum	
Red Osier Dogwood	
Serviceberry	
Red Flowering Currant	
Pacific Ninebark	
Golden Currant	
Total Ordered:	

The last day to order is March 19th

TOTAL ORDER		
Conifer Trees	_____ x \$1.75 =	
Deciduous Trees	_____ x \$2.75 =	
Shrubs	_____ x \$2.75 =	
Total Cost of Order:		
Paid by: Check Cash		
Please make checks payable to the Hood River SWCD.		
<i>Sorry, we cannot accept credit card payments.</i>		

**Submit Order and Payment to:
Hood River SWCD
3007 Experiment Station Road
Hood River, OR 97031**

**please note the distinction between
snowbrush and snowberry*



Hood River Soil & Water CONSERVATION DISTRICT

3007 Experiment Station Rd.
Hood River, OR 97031

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSRT STD.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ODELL, OR
PERMIT NO. 10

Inside...

SWCD Values, Technical Assistance Round Up.....	1
Financial Report, OWEB Small Grants, PSP.....	2-3
Agricultural Water Quality, Groundwater.....	4
Hood River Watershed Group Update.....	insert
NRCS, Strategic Action Plan.....	5
Wildfires, Weeds, Pollinators.....	6
Plant Sale Order Form.....	7

Now's the Time to Order Your Native Plants!

The Hood River SWCD is once again hosting a native plant sale! We provide a convenient and inexpensive way to obtain native plants. Native plants beautify the landscape, provide food and habitat for wildlife, add value and privacy to your property, and require little maintenance once established.

This year there are **36** different species to choose from, some of which we've never offered before!

Prices range from \$1.75-\$2.75 per plant. These are bare-root seedlings, 1-2 years old (8-18" tall), and are grown by local nurseries. Orders will be accepted now until March 19th. **Purchases will be available for pick-up on Friday and Saturday, April 2nd and 3rd, 2021.**

Please pre-order any plants you wish to purchase. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it is unclear if we will have plants available for purchase on pick-up days. Check out the SWCD's website at www.hoodriverswcd.org/plant-sale for more information on plant characteristics, site suitability, and wildlife usage.

And, as usual, feel free to call- we are always happy to talk plants!

Order Form inside!

