

ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017



Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District





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The Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District

35285 Millard Road, St. Helens, OR 97051 • 503.433.3205
 Hours: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (Monday-Friday)
information@columbiaswcd.com • www.columbiaswcd.com



Who We Are And What We Do

The Columbia SWCD was created in 1946 and has been serving the citizens of Columbia County ever since

The SWCDs of Oregon were created gradually starting in 1939. To date, there are 45 districts serving Oregon. They are considered subdivisions of state government, but function as local units led by a locally elected board of directors.

“District directors are elected on Oregon’s general election ballot and serve terms of four years without pay. Directors are members of business, professional and agricultural communities who understand the ecological relationships of soil, water, plant, and animals.

RIGHT: Floodplain planting on restoration site north of Clatskanie.



OUR MISSION

Offering people of our community assistance to sustain local natural resources.

OUR GOALS

- Effective Natural Resource Management
- Local and Regional Conservation Partnerships
- Conservation Planning and Implementation
- Watershed Enhancement
- Invasive Species Identification and Control
- Informed Citizens and Public Representatives
- Fiscal Accountability
- Financial Assistance for Conservation Effects

CONSERVATION PLANNING

With the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we can create a Conservation Plan for your property. These plans serve as a guide to protecting your natural resources and improving your land’s productivity.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The SWCD and its board members have been at this for a long time. If you have a question, feel free to ask. If we don’t know the answer, we have an extensive network of experts who will.

WEEDS

The Columbia SWCD is the county leader for weed control. We have numerous partners who assist us and are always happy to talk weeds with anyone!

Whether it’s talking to landowners or school kids, we are always striving to spread the word about conservation. If you are interested in learning more or having us speak to your group, please contact us.

Letter from the Manager



Kari Hollander
**DISTRICT MANAGER,
COLUMBIA SWCD**

It's time to take a deep breath. This year was a very full year. It started with some pretty big projects with short timeframes to get them completed, new staff, the beginning of our RCPP contract which started our NRCS watershed planning process, a 70th anniversary celebration, sponsoring the Ag Building at the fairgrounds, and many changes amongst some of our local partners including a few retirements and others moving to new opportunities. That is a lot of change in a short period of time which can be and was at times overwhelming, but always exciting when you lift your head up and see what is beyond the challenges.

I cannot say enough about how great the Columbia SWCD team is and I need to make an effort to do it more. The big-ticket items I listed above are only those activities and projects above and beyond the normally daily work that takes place in Columbia County and none of it would be possible without each and every person in the SWCD office. This team fields hundreds of Technical Assistance inquiries every year, engages with local partners on issues that affect all of us including, invasive weeds, ground water issues, agriculture, natural resource education, walking others through the permitting processes, being the liaison between property owners and various agencies, and

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

connecting others for stronger more resilient partnerships in the future. The SWCD staff and board are what make all of this possible.

We had a few special moments this past year that shouldn't go without mention. In December of 2016 I was asked to speak at a Partnership Symposium put on by NRCS and NACD in Atlanta. To be a part of Chief Weller's last hoorah before he stepped down as Chief of NRCS was a great honor to represent not only Columbia County but Oregon as well. Congressman Merkley presented a flag to the SWCD and spoke of the community service the SWCD provides to Columbia County. Oregon NRCS recognized us as strong partner in Oregon for the Emergency Watershed Protection work we completed this year assisting cities and private

landowners with 3 million dollars of emergency work throughout the county. The hard work and dedication of everyone here at the Columbia SWCD and collaboration with our local partners is what opened up the opportunities to be recognized by so many this past year.

In October 2016 we celebrated 70 years of conservation in Columbia County and the 20-year anniversaries of all three of Columbia County's watershed councils. It was a wonderful time; good food, great people, and we also raised almost \$6000 for natural resource education in Columbia County.

Martin Luther King Jr said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” For this little district the past year has been full of big challenges that were each followed by big success. We left the days of comfort and convenience many years ago. Society often only takes inventory of the beginning challenge and the end success; what needs to be lit up from time to time is hidden in between; that is the magic that makes it possible. For us in Columbia County that magic is the staff and board of the SWCD and their commitment to making our little corner of Oregon an amazing place to be.



On May 2, 2017 the NRCS presented the Columbia SWCD with its annual District Partnership Award. The Columbia SWCD was selected for performing outstanding customer service and technical expertise to successfully implement projects under the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program triggered by the record-setting rain and flooding in December 2015.

The Staff:

This has been another big year of changes for the Columbia SWCD and our in-house partner agency, NRCS. In April 2017 Angela Reseland took a position with NRCS out of their Astoria office. Her warm and bubbly personality is missed, but we are thrilled for our neighbor county. In July 2016 the District hired Selene Keeney as a Resource Conservationist. Selene has extensive experience with

permitting and wetlands restoration. In January 2017, she took over the role as the Council Coordinator for the LCRWC. Selene grew up in Clatskanie and has a strong connection to and knowledge of the Lower Columbia River area. In August 2016, the District hired Monica Blanchard also as a Resource Conservationist. Monica adds a solid background in fish biology, hydrology, and stream restoration to the staff.

Kari Hollander,

DISTRICT MANAGER

503.433.3205 x102 • kari.hollander@columbiaswcd.com



Kari has been with the District since September 2006. She sees that the vision and mission of the District are met and seeks new opportunities that will benefit the citizens of Columbia County. When not working she spends time with her two daughters, painting, cooking, baking, and traveling near and

far. She also volunteers in neighboring Cowlitz County with underserved communities developing leaders and mentoring teenage girls to pursue their dreams.

Malyssa Legg,

ASSISTANT DISTRICT MANAGER

503.433.3205 x107 • malyssa.legg@columbiaswcd.com



Malyssa has been with the District since April 2009. Malyssa handles the day to day operations in the office as well as fiscal and grant management. When not working, Malyssa enjoys cooking, baking, reading, watching lots of sports with her husband, and playing with their adorable cats Sharkie and Lou.

Nathan Herr,

SENIOR RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST

503.433.3205 x101 • nathan.herr@columbiaswcd.com



Nathan has been with the District since January 2012. He has a BS in Environmental science and a minor in Fisheries from Oregon State University. He oversees field staff operations and is the lead on the ODA water quality program for Columbia County. In his spare time, Nathan enjoys being outdoors with

his dogs, wife, and daughters or out hunting and fishing as much as possible.

Selene Keeney,

RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST

503.433.3205 x104 • selene.keeney@columbiaswcd.com



Selene joined the District in July 2016 and became the Coordinator for the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council in January 2017. She has a B.S. in Science and a minor in Botany from Portland State University. Prior to joining the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation

District, Selene worked as an Ecologist/Project Manager for a private consulting firm. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her family, exploring and being on or in Pacific Northwest rivers, streams and lakes.

Monica Blanchard,

RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST

503.433.3205 x109 • monica.blanchard@columbiaswcd.com



Monica joined the District in August 2016. She works on the Technical Assistance aspects of the District's mission and is our resident fish expert/enthusiast. She has worked in streams in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Utah since graduating from Western Washington

University in 2008. She followed her passion for streams to a graduate degree in Watershed Science/Fisheries at Utah State University. When not working in streams she still loves walking along and paddling in them. She also enjoys backpacking, snowboarding, cooking, and traveling near and far with her friends and family.

Crystalyn Bush,

FIELD TECHNICIAN/OUTREACH COORDINATOR

503.433.3205 x108 • crystalyn.bush@columbiaswcd.com



Crystalyn has been with the District since March 2016. She oversees the District's noxious weeds program, supports field operations, and coordinates all outreach activities. She has a B.S. in Environmental Science from Oregon State University and a B.A. in English Literature from

Middlebury College. Crystalyn enjoys spending time with her family learning about the woods, playing outside, gardening, and roasting s'mores.

Jennifer Steinke,

OFFICE ASSISTANT

503.433.3205 x100 • jennifer.steinke@columbiaswcd.com



Jennifer has been with the District since March 2016. In addition to her administrative and reception duties, Jennifer supports the rest of the staff by assisting with tasks like website updates, event planning, minute recording, and writing the safety newsletter. In her spare time she enjoys hiking, baking, knitting, and exploring costume/SFX makeup. Please contact Jennifer if you would like to use our meeting room facilities.

NRCS/LCEP Staff

Don Mehlhoff,

NRCS DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

503.438.3146 • don.mehlhoff@or.usda.gov



Don has almost 35 years with NRCS. He began working for the agency in North Dakota followed by several years in eastern Washington, northern Idaho and now Oregon. He has been a certified crop advisor since 1997 and is certified as a journeyman conservation planner with Oregon NRCS

since 2000. Don and his family have resided in St. Helens since 2000 when he accepted the NRCS position here. "My favorite thing about working for NRCS is the opportunity to work with farmers, ranchers and forest operators. The chance to visit their farms, discuss their operations and their interest in conservation makes the job rewarding. I have typically learned more from them than I have probably provided in return."

Dee Robinson,

NRCS PROGRAM SUPPORT TECH

503.438.3147 • dee.robinson@or.usda.gov



Dee began working for the Northwest Oregon RC&D Council in 1987, and was converted over to SCS/NRCS in 1989. Over the past 24 years, Dee has served in many different capacities, providing assistance to RC&D and the North Coast Basin NRCS. She and her husband, Vic,

live in Forest Grove, where they also own and operate a music store, Vic's Guitar Cave. They enjoy music, reading, and the love of their life is their Australian Shepherd, Kapo.

Angela Reseland,

NRCS SOIL CONSERVATIONIST

503.325.4571 • angela.reseland@or.usda.gov



Angela began working for the NRCS as a student intern in 2010. She has a B.A. in Anthropology, a M.S. in Resource Management from Central Washington University, and a M.S. in Environmental Studies from Evergreen State College. In her free time Angie enjoys cooking, gardening, watching football

(especially the Seattle Seahawks), and adventuring with her husband, John, and their dog Lizzie. Angie took a position at the Astoria office in April of 2017 and is doing great things out there.

Jennifer Dezso,

FIELD RESTORATION ECOLOGIST

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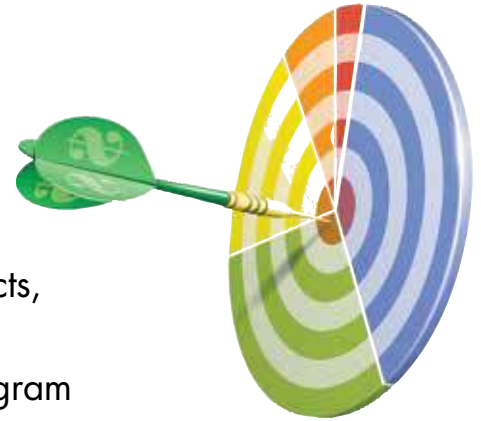


Jennifer joined the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership in May 2016. She works with the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District and local watershed councils to identify, plan and implement restoration projects in habitats important for Pacific salmon recovery. Prior to

joining the Estuary Partnership, Jenny worked as a Project Manager at the Clackamas River Basin Council to develop and implement in-stream habitat restoration projects, as well as lead a 30 stream mile riparian revegetation program. She holds a B.A. in Environmental Science and Geography from the University of South Florida.

Finances

What Are Your Tax Dollars Doing for Columbia County?



- Increased staff to address client inquiries, develop projects, and provide technical assistance
- Development of more comprehensive noxious weed program and educational outreach
- Ability to develop long-term restoration plans and partnerships

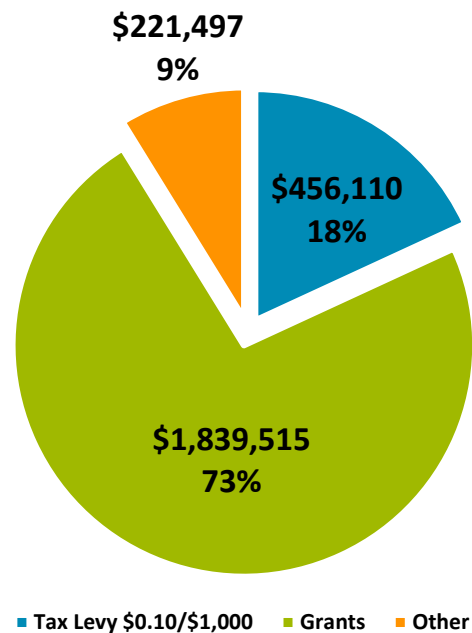
BALANCE SHEET

COLUMBIA SWCD
Summary Balance Sheet
 As of June 30, 2017

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	110,917.78
Accounts Receivable	27,563.22
Other Current Assets	34,820.00
Total Current Assets	173,301.00
Fixed Assets	1,308,999.74
TOTAL ASSETS	1,482,300.74
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	919,602.07
Credit Cards	69.80
Other Current Liabilities	457,381.85
Total Current Liabilities	1,377,053.72
Total Liabilities	1,377,053.72
Equity	105,247.02
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	1,482,300.74

**Audit available for review at the district office after 12/31/17.*

RESOURCES 2016-2017



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES PROVIDED TO THE COMMUNITY

- Review Land Development Service Applications and respond to field referral for many different land use issues
- Partner with Columbia County Roads Dept on bridge and culvert projects.
- Historic documents available for viewing
- Resource for drainage districts, improvement companies, and diking districts
- Partner with local school districts agriculture and natural resource programs.
- And much more...

Get Involved:

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GET INVOLVED AND HELP KEEP OUR COUNTY VITAL, HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE:

- Become a Board member! We are holding elections in November, 2018 for Zones 1, 3, and an At Large Director position. If you are interested in issues involving land management, agriculture, conservation, and restoration, consider running for one of our Board positions.
- Volunteer or be an Associate Director. Whether you have a special skill set to offer, are studying to go into the field of natural resources, or are just generally looking to help out, volunteers are always greatly appreciated.
- Implement conservation practices on your land. Call our office or the NRCS to get more information about what you can do to improve soil health, water quality, and habitat on your land.
- Start a community work group. Identify common interests or concerns among friends/neighbors and rally for the cause. Check out SOLVE's website for volunteer opportunities across the state and to learn how to become an Event Coordinator.

The Meeting Room

The Columbia SWCD meeting room accommodates groups up to 50 people with a fully equipped kitchen.

A charge of \$75 for private parties and rental is free for community groups and non-profits.

If you are interested in using the meeting space, please contact Jennifer at 503.433.3205 or jennifer.steinke@columbiaswcd.com.

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We are very pleased with the ease of use and the technology available in the meeting room....An added bonus is the availability of the kitchen area for use for catered lunches. The staff is very easy to work with. It is a definite benefit to the community.

—Casey Wheeler,
Executive Director of Columbia Pacific Food Bank





Hills Haven Road in ruins after the culvert blew out in December 2015.

MERRILL CREEK PROJECT: *Bridging the Gap*

Crystalyn Bush

COLUMBIA SWCD OUTREACH COORDINATOR/FIELD TECHNICIAN

The Columbia SWCD spent most of 2016 focusing on emergency projects created by the winter storms in December of the previous year. One of the big success stories from last year was the installation of a new culvert and crossing over Merrill Creek. Hills Haven Road provides access to homes for three landowners, some of whom are elderly and have trouble getting around. These pictures show the deteriorated condition of the previous culvert and the damage done to Hills Haven Road during the December 2015 storm.

Charles and Carolyn Petersen own about 36 acres of land off of Hills Haven and have lived there for almost 40 years. They raise sheep and a couple cows. In the past they have also kept pigs, turkeys, and other various livestock. According to Charles, the culvert was initially installed in 1981. During the flood of 1996 it almost washed out and Petersen recalls using a small pump to divert as much water as possible in an attempt to keep the culvert from going. "Any time there were heavy rains we would have to clear out the culvert," he remembers.



A close up of the culvert after the road had fallen away. Items like small trees and the footbridge from upstream collected on and around the culvert creating a large blockage.

He remarks that they knew the culvert was not in great shape, but they had no idea what they would find when it was eventually pulled from the creek in 2016. When the storm hit in December 2015 the force of the water rushing through Merrill Creek slammed trees, debris, and even a footbridge against the degraded culvert causing it to fail completely. When the culvert blew out everything above it went too leaving an enormous 30 to 40 foot gap in the road. Petersen says he remembers getting a call that day from a neighbor warning him not to



Top: Merrill Creek overtopped its banks and flooded this property owner's yard.

Bottom: Mangled culvert pulled from Merrill Creek after December 2015 storm.

use his road. He would not be able to use his road for almost an entire year.

Neighbors were kind enough to allow the three affected landowners to use their private drive just west of Hills Haven. The road is very twisty and completely blind to oncoming cars for most of the way. When driving to and from her home Carolyn Petersen remarked, "You just clenched the steering wheel and prayed a lot." Getting supplies up to the house during this time was challenging and stressful. In addition, everyone on Hills Haven had to cross their fingers that there wouldn't be any emergencies because the road did not meet requirements for emergency vehicle passage.

After the road washed out, Petersen and a neighbor took their bulldozers down to the creek to see if they could remove the battered culvert from the stream where it was preventing flow and causing flooding.

They were able to pull the culvert from the creek in pieces. When they did Petersen was shocked to see how bad it was. The bottom of the pipe was completely rotted out.

After looking into the cost and permitting requirements to install a new culvert, Petersen decided to contact the Columbia SWCD for help. It seemed for awhile that assistance would not be possible under the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP). However, with the perseverance of the SWCD's District Manager, backing from some local politicians, and willingness from the landowners to cover the cost of the culvert, an arrangement was formed and the project was awarded funding.

The Columbia SWCD hired Herrera Environmental Consultants as the engineer and Aquatic Contracting, LLC as the contractor for the project. After an arduous battle to obtain permits and receive authorization from the National Marine Fisheries Society to work outside of the in-water work period,

the Columbia SWCD finally had the go ahead to begin work in October. As part of the project a bottomless arch culvert was installed, allowing for better flow conditions, reduced risk of flooding to adjacent properties, and improved fish passage. The road was regraded and repaired. Finally, the streambanks were stabilized and large wood structures were placed in and along the stream to increase habitat value. Materials were sourced from the site with trees that had to be felled or had already fallen.

Petersen says he is very grateful for the help the Columbia SWCD provided and very happy to once again be able to use his road. The District is very pleased with the outcome of the project for both landowners and the environment and is ecstatic to have been part of the solution. Chalk this one up as a win for everyone!



The undersized culvert was replaced with a bottomless arch culvert for better flow, reduced flooding, and improved fish passage. Hills Haven Road was reconstructed.

Inset: Large wood installed along Merrill Creek for bank stabilization and improved habitat.

NRCS Annual Report

Don Mehlhoff

NRCS DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

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The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service, was conceived during the years of the great dust bowl, over 70 years ago. The need for stewardship of our valuable natural resources, like productive soil, clean water, healthy native plant communities, fish and wildlife habitat and clean water was finally realized and programs and people were put in place to provide technical and financial assistance to private agriculture and forest operations to conserve those natural resources. Those programs, although changing over time, still exist today in almost all corners of our nation and territories.



Clients' young son and dog on their farm.

I am thankful to have been part of an agency that strives to build relationships with private operators, and offers up natural resources assistance on a voluntary basis. I have worked for NRCS (SCS) for nearly 35 years now. Of that, almost 18 years has been in Columbia County. It has been a real pleasure to work with so many great operators, doing their best to make improvements on their properties and help their neighbors as well.

One of my favorite things about working for NRCS and so closely with the Columbia SWCD is our shared values as agencies. We strive to respect private property rights. We respect people's values to operate their property in order to meet their needs and at the same time maintain sustainability for their land. We also believe in wise use of natural resources that go beyond one property, but may impact neighbors, watersheds and whole regions within the State of Oregon.

As mentioned our farm bill programs are voluntary, but they are in place to help landowners make improvements as well as meet federal and state regulations that are intended to protect the public's right to clean water, fish and wildlife, healthy soil, plants and air quality.

Below is a partial list of NRCS conservation practices implemented by landowners during 2017.

PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED IN 2017

- Fence – 3536 feet of fence for livestock management and wildlife friendly purposes.
- Wildlife Structure – 16 structures including cavity nesting boxes.
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management – 555 acres of land improved for wildlife habitat.
- Hedgerow – 2250 feet
- Herbaceous Weed Control – 10 acres
- Tree and Shrub Plantings - 5 acres
- Forest Stand Improvement – 140 acres. Pre-commercial thinning and release projects
- Forest Slash Treatment – 140 acres
- Early Successional Habitat Management – 9 acres
- Pasture Plantings – 10.2 acres planting to improve grazing for Columbian white-tailed deer.
- Forest Management Plans – 5 plans
- High Tunnel – 1 (1@2160sq.ft)
- Prescribed Grazing – 38 acres
- Provided technical assistance to over 257 customers



Hayland planting in far field as part of the Columbian White-Tailed Deer conservation implementation strategy under EQIP.

PROGRAMS OFFERED IN 2017

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**
– EQIP is our most popular conservation program. It provides financial assistance to agricultural and forestry operations to address natural resource problems. NRCS funded 14 new applications for EQIP in 2017.

At this time NRCS in Columbia County has two conservation implementation strategies using EQIP funds. The first is Columbia County Forest Diversity Initiative. Through this initiative forest operators in the target area (Rainier, Goble, Clatskanie Area) are offered financial assistance to implement practices that improve forest diversity or to assist with the development of a forest management plan.

The second is Columbian White-Tailed Deer Habitat Improvement. This initiative concentrates efforts to improve grassland habitat for the recovery efforts of the endangered Columbian white-tailed deer. Practices that improve the deer's grazing, browse, cover and accessibility will be promoted on farmland within the Columbia River floodplains in the Clatskanie and Rainier areas.

EQIP also provides for a national initiative to install high tunnels for fresh farm markets. High tunnels are similar to greenhouse, but the plants are planted in the ground, not in pots. High tunnels are typically not heated but the protection from the elements is intended to lengthen the growing season in cooler climates.

- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)**
– NRCS currently has 8 CREP contracts in the county. This program pays an annual rental payment for marginal pastureland that is planted to trees and shrubs along streams and rivers. Most of the CREP acres are in the Birkenfeld area. About 396 total acres of riparian forest buffers have been installed through this program.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)** – The CStP program offers annual stewardship payments to agricultural and forest owners who maintain good natural resource stewardship on their property and implement various enhancement activities. NRCS currently has 7 active contracts.



2,160 foot high tunnel installed in spring 2017 on clients' farm to extend the growing season.

- **Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)** – Columbia County has two permanent WRP easements that cover 436 acres and a new application in 2017 on about 50 acres. The WRP program offers to purchase easements on agricultural lands to restore wetland values on the property using various conservation practices.
- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**
– Another NRCS program that outside groups or agencies can apply for is called RCPP. With RCPP, the applicant brings matching dollars to the table that will help extend the federal funds in order to address natural resource issues. NRCS in Columbia County has two RCPP grants. The first is with the Pinchot Institute to work with private forest owners to assess carbon market opportunities. We have 6 new contracts in 2017 for this RCPP including practices such as pre-commercial thinning and development of forest management plans.

The Columbia SWCD applied for the second RCPP and was granted funding that will be used in the Lower Columbia River Watershed to improve water quality and fish habitat. This program began in 2017 with the creation of a watershed plan. In 2018, practice implementation will begin.

For more information about programs and assistance available through the NRCS and the Columbia SWCD, contact us at 503-433-3205 or stop by and see us at 35285 Millard Road, St. Helens, OR 97051.

LCRWC Annual Report



Selene Keeney

LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL COORDINATOR

503-433-3205 x104 • Selene@lowercolumbiariver.org

These past years have brought many changes for the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council. Upon winning her election bid, the Council's esteemed Coordinator of 20 years, Margaret Magruder, transitioned to a new role as a Columbia County Commissioner. Despite her intense schedule Margaret continues to be involved as a member of the Council. The Council's Forest Products Industry representation also changed and this year we welcomed Lindsay Charity, Weyerhaeuser NW Oregon Operations Forester, and Doug Sheldon, Weyerhaeuser NW Oregon Team Leader, as new Council members.

Upon Margaret's departure, the Council appointed Selene Keeney (myself) as the new Council Coordinator. Honestly, Margaret left big shoes to fill, but at least she left them pointed in the right direction! Since I've been with the Council I've had the chance to meet many members and others from the community. For those of you I have yet to meet, here is a little bit about me. I have a decade of experience leading restoration projects and over 15 years of experience conducting field studies. Before joining the Council as Coordinator, I was an Ecologist/Project Manager for a private natural resource consulting firm for nine years. This work was multifaceted, and I learned to wear many hats working on all aspects and phases of restoration projects. I'm looking forward to

using my knowledge and experience to further the Council's mission of working toward healthy watersheds and healthy communities.

The majority of 2016 and first part of 2017 was devoted to repairing flood damage that resulted from a December 2015 storm, through the USDA-NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program and implementing projects put on hold because of the sheer volume of 2016 EWP projects. The Clatskanie River Crossings #5 and #6, which were undersized fish barriers, were replaced this last summer with bottomless arch culverts. This project opened up approximately 2.5 miles of quality spawning and rearing habitat in the Clatskanie River. These

projects were made possible through partnerships with the Columbia County Roads Department, Hancock Forest Management, the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Local businesses Kynsi Construction and Lower Columbia Engineering were contracted to complete the work.

The Council continues building on its work developing projects on Westport Slough and Carr Slough that are large in scope and complex, and is looking forward to seeing these projects implemented in the coming years. The USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), a five-year \$3 million funding package, which is focused on restoration projects on the Lower Columbia-Clatskanie River systems, has begun to be implemented. Many years of planning for the RCPP has resulted in an inventory of priority projects to be further developed and implemented in the coming years. It's going to be exciting to see the positive results of this program within the Council's watershed.

One thing that has not changed is the Council's mission of working toward healthy watersheds and healthy communities while keeping the needs of the community in the forefront. For over 20 years now the Council has been realizing its mission and looks forward to serving the community for decades more to come.



Crossing #5 before construction.



Crossing #5 after construction. Two undersized and ungraded culverts were replaced with 1 large bottomless arch culvert.

SBWC Annual Report

Pat Welle

SCAPPOOSE BAY WATERSHED COUNCIL COORDINATOR

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The SBWC has been taking the time this year to do long-range planning, while expanding the nursery and preparing for upcoming large projects. The Council is managing two Strategic Action Plans – one for the full watershed but focused on Milton, Scappoose and Honeyman subwatersheds, and another for the Sauvie Island-Scappoose Bay Bottomlands areas. The goal of each plan is to guide future projects toward an increased pace in restoring and protecting valuable in-stream and riparian habitats. The Council is working with multiple local, regional and state partners in plan development, and has begun outreach to landowners for plan inputs.

A large success this past year has been the capacity and organization of our Native Plant Nursery behind

Scappoose High School. The nursery has weekly volunteer days, with regular volunteers and students logging in over 1000 hours the first half of 2017. We doubled the size of the shade structure, greatly expanding the capability for more species and greater control on growth and upsizing. The irrigation and plant labeling systems were also improved. More plants are being collected locally as seed, and have provided native plants to several local projects. In addition, the high school is using the nursery for a J-Term course in January working on propagation methods of native species. We also work weekly with students from Oregon Outreach.

The Council has been working with five floating homeowners on Multnomah Channel to measure water temperature and clarity for the past year. Unfortunately, these



New and improved labeling system for native plants.

measurements confirm high water temperatures (as high as 25 degrees C in early August), and also indicate continual mixing throughout the water depths.

We have two major upcoming projects – a culvert replacement on Dart Creek and restoration work in the lower reaches of both North and South Scappoose Creeks. Working with Columbia County Road Department, the Council will replace the perched culvert on Robinette Road in July 2018 – this will open Dart Creek up to increased juvenile and adult salmon use, particularly in the cooler waters of this tributary. Additionally, funding has just been awarded for in-stream and riparian restoration on two parcels of South Scappoose Creek through the City of Scappoose, and a section of North Scappoose between Hwy. 30 and the Scappoose-Vernonia Hwy. More details on these projects will be provided as the designs are completed in spring 2018.



The new shade cover in the nursery increases our ability to grow plants that are not able to tolerate full sun conditions, which is the case for many understory plants.

UNWC Annual Report

Maggie Peyton

UPPER NEHALEM WATERSHED COUNCIL COORDINATOR

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Over the last year the UNWC continued to advance our mission “To foster stewardship and understanding of the natural resources of the Upper Nehalem Watershed among the stakeholders of the watershed communities in order to protect, conserve, restore and sustain the health and functions of the watershed” through the following actions:

Planning: Advanced a complex watershed analysis supported by a network of stakeholders and technical advisors assembled through the Nehalem Strategic Action Plan development process. With the support of numerous

partners, we will wrap up the planning process and implement our first suite of high priority projects in the summer of 2018. Projects located in the headwaters of Rock Creek, Lousignont and Oak Ranch Creek, on Oregon Department of Forestry managed lands, are designed to encourage Beaver colony expansion to naturally enhance native Coho salmon spawning, rearing and refuge habitat;

Riparian: Continued working in cooperation with streamside landowners, Columbia SWCD, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Department of Environmental Quality, Northwest Oregon

Restoration Partnership, and Columbia River Youth Corps, to develop and implement riparian reforestation projects along temperature limited stream reaches within a strategic implementation area. Seedlings are now grown at the Nehalem Native Plant Nursery in cooperation with the Vernonia School District;

Fish Passage: Secured funding from OWEB and ODFW, and the support of Columbia County Road Department and Lower Columbia Engineering, for the implementation of the passage improvement Oak Ranch Creek Apiary road crossing at MP 16.1, on track for summer 2018 construction;

Habitat: Installed 15 large woody debris jams along Archibald Creek a tributary to Oak Ranch Creek improving a mile of essential salmon habitat. Construction was performed on Weyerhaeuser land by McCoy logging and supervised by ODFW; and

Water quality monitoring: UNWC staff and volunteers collected summer temperature and winter turbidity samples from 40+ river network sites from Cochran to Elsie. Results are added to the database of baseline/trend monitoring sites established in 1992 by the Nehalem Valley Chapter of the Izaak Walton League.

UNWC is excited to embark on our most productive restoration year since our establishment in 1996.



Large wood project along Archibald Creek.

NRCS Partner Report

In just twelve short months, the Columbia SWCD and NRCS implemented substantial construction repairs across Columbia County to protect utilities, roads, and properties threatened by the December 2015 storm. The storm prompted an emergency Presidential declaration for disaster relief, signed in February of 2016. NRCS and the Columbia SWCD partnered together to provide recovery assistance to landowners and Cities through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. EWP is a competitive NRCS program that offers financial and technical assistance to help communities protect property and infrastructure in response to natural disasters. As a result of the SWCD's partnership with NRCS to implement the EWP Program, we have protected more than \$3 million of private and public infrastructure in Columbia County.

The SWCD sponsored over \$2 million in construction repairs for twelve EWP projects in the county to protect infrastructure, private



Creating a manhole for access to the new pipe installed on Fox Creek.



Streambank stabilization project along the Clatskanie River to prevent further erosion and improve flow conditions.

property, and habitat from further damage. The projects included streambank stabilization to protect utilities and bridges, landslide stabilization, and debris removal from clogged channels. Also of note, a large sinkhole in Rainier was repaired. The sinkhole was caused by a clogged underground culvert on Fox Creek and threatened several businesses, utilities, and roads in the area as well as the safety of anyone in the vicinity. The sinkhole repair is one of the largest and most complex EWP projects completed in Oregon.

It was extremely challenging to obtain all of the permits and find contractors to carry out the repairs on such short notice. Everyone was busy recovering from the flood damage. Because the entire county is deemed 'essential fish habitat' (a designation by the National Marine Fisheries Service that describes all waters and substrate necessary for fish to spawn, breed, feed and grow to maturity), any in-stream repairs had to improve or maintain the stream health. Consequently, most repair projects

used bioengineering treatments like rootwads, log structures, and heavy native plantings to improve habitat and riparian health for long term sustainability. By incorporating bioengineering treatments, the SWCD and NRCS protected and conserved habitat and water quality in coastal Oregon streams and rivers with Threatened and Endangered salmon species. It was a win for the community and a win for the fish.

Teamwork and good communication made it possible to get so much conservation on the ground in one short year. I don't think any of us want to do that again anytime soon, but we also know that we played an important role in helping landowners and Cities when they needed it most. The SWCD's work as an EWP sponsor provided tremendous economic and ecologic benefit to Columbia County.

Meghan Walter,
**NRCS OREGON,
STATE HYDRAULIC ENGINEER**

2016
2017

Emergency Watershed Protection Projects

A Photo Summary of the Before and After of Our Emergency Projects

Projects Funded By: NRCS, Columbia SWCD, City of Scappoose, City of Clatskanie, Infrastructure Finance Authority, OWEB small grants, and private landowners

STREAMBANK STABILIZATION / CULVERT REPLACEMENT

Merrill Creek, Deer Island, OR



SINKHOLE REPAIR / CULVERT REPLACEMENT

Fox Creek, Rainier, OR

SEWER LINE REPAIR STREAMBANK STABILIZATION

S. Scappoose Creek,
Scappoose, OR



BACKYARD LANDSLIDE

Scappoose OR





**4TH STREET PROTECTION /
BANK STABILIZATION**
Clatskanie River, Clatskanie, OR

LEVEE REPAIR
Nehalem River, Vernonia, OR



**SEDIMENT REMOVAL /
CULVERT REPLACEMENT**
Keystone Creek, Clatskanie, OR

**BRIDGE STABILIZATION /
SEDIMENT REMOVAL**
Carcus Creek, Clatskanie, OR



**STREAMBANK
STABILIZATION**
Clatskanie River, Clatskanie, OR

“Fish Friendly”



Monica Blanchard
COLUMBIA SWCD RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST

People and fish have one really important thing in common: we both live in watersheds. A watershed is everything contained in the geographical area that drains to the same body of water. These waterways provide us with drinking water, food, recreational opportunities, and habitat for the creatures that share our watersheds. The SWCD undertakes large restoration projects involving years of planning, permitting, many partners, and extensive construction to protect and promote healthy streams and watersheds. However, there are small, every day things that you can do to help keep our waters healthy and productive. Check out this list and help keep our waters “fish friendly”!



Young salmonids and sculpin caught during a fish salvage. Fish are removed and transported to a different part of the stream before in-water work begins.

1. Pick up your pup’s poop- especially when you are close to a river or stream.
2. If you live next to a stream, plant native trees and shrubs in the riparian area (the area closest to the stream or river). There are many beautiful natives that provide shade, habitat, and bank stability. A few examples include red flowering currants, red osier dogwood, vine maples, Indian plum, saskatoon, and western red cedar. As a bonus the following natives make tasty berries: salmonberry, thimbleberry, red huckleberry, and evergreen huckleberry!
3. Wash your car at a self-service or machine carwash location. If you wash your car at home, try to prevent the soapy water from draining into storm drains by washing your car on the grass or an area where the water will percolate into the ground before reaching the streams.
4. Keep trash out of the stream. Pick up garbage when you see it alongside a stream.
5. Reduce or stop using chemicals, such as pesticides and herbicides, on your lawn and garden. If you do use them, make sure to avoid applying them before a rainstorm and to only use the recommended amount. For a more environmentally friendly option, try planting companion plants that deter pests or use natural sprays.
6. Gather rainwater in rain barrels— you can do this on a small scale for watering a little urban garden or on a large scale for farm use.

Collecting Rain For the Farm



Nathan Herr
**COLUMBIA SWCD
RESOURCE
CONSERVATIONIST**

There is a huge need in the agricultural community for more water. This is something that every farmer has to deal with, whether you are growing crops or raising livestock, water is always a concern, specifically during the hot summer months when the creeks start to dry up. In Oregon, we have a fairly easy and environmentally friendly solution: rainwater harvesting.

Rainwater Harvesting has started to gain a lot of traction in this area. It makes sense, we should take advantage of living in an area that gets anywhere from 40 to 80 inches of rain a year. Oregon State Laws make it really easy to collect rainwater. In Oregon, when the water touches the ground it becomes property of the state, but what happens before it hits the ground? When the rain hits the roof of your house, barn, shop or shed and goes into a gutter, that's water you can collect and use for agriculture or other purposes.

In the lower part of the county, where we get roughly 40 inches of rain on average per year, a 10'x10' shed can yield over 2,500 gallons of water a year. To see how much you could collect check out this online calculator: <https://www.watercache.com/resources/rainwater-collection-calculator>.



Large rainwater harvest system installed with small grant on a farm in Deer Island.

Here are a few basic steps to follow in developing your rainwater harvest system:

1.) Determine how much you would like to be able to store taking into account your projected rainwater production and consumption levels throughout the year. When determining storage size also consider where you want to put your collection tank(s) and make sure you have enough space available.

2.) It is better to collect from a metal roof, as composite roofs can shed undesirable materials and chemicals into your water. Install some kind of mesh over the entrance to the tank to keep out leaves and debris and use a first flush diverter to prevent contaminants from entering your tank. Depending on the size and weight of your tank you may need to install a concrete slab or do some prep work to ensure you are properly supporting the tank and placing it on a level surface. Some thought should also be given to where water will go if the tank



Photo: morningchores.com/rainwater-harvesting

Example of domestic rainwater collection system.

overflows. Direct water away from your house and towards a pervious surface.

3.) From here there are two options: using some kind of gravity fed system or installing a pump to run the water to your livestock or crops. Contact a water systems or well drilling company that has experience with rainwater harvest systems to help you determine your needs and properly install your system. If you have questions about rainwater collection or other ag-related topics, feel free to call or email Nathan at the District at 503-433-3205 or Nathan.herr@columbiaswcd.com.

Spread the Word, Not the Weeds:



Crystalyn Bush
**COLUMBIA SWCD FIELD TECHNICIAN/
OUTREACH COORDINATOR**

One of our goals at the District is to grow our noxious weeds program. We currently run two annual treatment programs: 1) for Garlic mustard and 2) for Knotweed in riparian areas. These programs are funded by grants from the Oregon State Weed Board which, to date, have been mostly limited to work performed within the Scappoose Bay Watershed. We are working hard to grow not only these treatment programs, but also to fill in data gaps by conducting surveys, improving our

ability to collect and report sightings, identifying new threats, finding funds to work on other projects, and expanding our outreach about noxious weeds.

This summer the SWCD led a crew from the Columbia River Youth Corps. on a project funded by a grant from the Bureau of Land Management to remove a significant spurge laurel infestation on a commercial property in Saint Helens. The crew used brute strength and a couple of weed wrenches to pull out



CRYC crew on a truck bed full of spurge laurel.



Students carrying out large garbage bags full of spurge laurel.



Bagging up spurge laurel to prevent resprouting or exposure to other people.

almost half a ton of spurge laurel. This is an example of a noxious weed that has not received a lot of attention, but is clearly making its way into Columbia County. In addition to being highly toxic to people, the SWCD believes this plant poses a significant threat to our forest landscapes.

Other weeds that have recently started drawing attention from the SWCD include: Italian arum, Yellow archangel, and Meadow knapweed. If you observe any of these plants growing on your property please report it to us by emailing weeds@columbiaswcd.com or calling our Invasive Species Hotline at 1-800-741-6105. The more information we

SPURGE LAUREL



Photo: Columbia SWCD

ITALIAN ARUM



Photo: Dr. Tim Miller,
WA State Noxious Weed Control Board

YELLOW ARCHANGEL



Photo: Nisa Karimi,
WI Dept. of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org

MEADOW KNAPWEED



Photo: Great Smoky Mountains National Park Resource
Management, USDI National Park Service, Bugwood.org

have about these invaders, the more we can learn about their presence, growth trends, and impact.

Spurge laurel: Evergreen, rhododendron look-alike; grows up to 5 feet tall; dark green, waxy leaves; flowers in late winter and produces blue berries in early spring; prefers very shady conditions. Berries and sap are extremely toxic.

Italian arum: Grows up to 18" tall; arrowhead shaped leaves are waxy and have silver-gray veins; leaves die back in summer; flowers occur in mid-late spring and bright orange berries in late summer. Prefers shady, moist conditions. Spreads by seed and underground tubers. All parts of plant are extremely toxic.

Yellow archangel: Leaves are silvery-grey, oval-shaped, and toothed; small, yellow flowers on erect stems; spreads horizontally by stolons; prefers lightly shaded areas and moist, nutrient rich soils. Takes over understories and outcompetes native plants.

Meadow knapweed: Grows up to 3 feet tall; stems many-branched with single flower on top; blooms in midsummer to fall; pink to reddish-purple flowers; brown brushy-fringed bracts on flower head. Found along roadsides, pastures, riverbanks, forest openings and other various sites. Reduces grass productivity for livestock; outcompetes native grasses and forbs.

The District is committed to pursuing funding and devoting time to protect our most sensitive and valuable ecological areas from the spread of harmful invasives. We are also committed to providing technical assistance to landowners dealing with noxious weeds on their own property. Our main goal when it comes to weeds is to educate and arm landowners with the knowledge to prevent establishment, control, or to treat noxious weeds on their property. To that end, this is the third year that we are putting out our Invasive/Native calendar which is mailed to every residence in the county with a half acre or more. We are also devoting space in our quarterly newsletters to inform readers about noxious weeds and are working on adding information to our website for online users.

QUESTIONS?

If you ever have a question about noxious weeds or need help identifying a plant please stop by our office, email, or call us at the numbers listed above. You can help us to fight the spread of noxious weeds by:

- 1) reporting sightings
- 2) controlling weeds on your property
- 3) starting neighborhood work parties to protect the areas you love
- 4) choosing natives when planting
- 5) brushing off clothes, shoes, pets, and cleaning equipment before leaving a site where noxious weeds could be present
- 6) spreading the word not the weeds.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION AREAS:

Working in the Nehalem



CRYC crew planting willow stakes along a side-channel to improve water quality, soil stability and habitat.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is tasked with executing the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act passed by the Oregon Legislature in 1993. This law requires the ODA to implement plans and regulations to prevent and correct water pollution from agricultural practices and achieve established water quality standards. As part of this program, ODA has developed Strategic Implementation Areas (SIA) as a way of focusing efforts, systematically addressing issues, and maximizing ecological results. These areas are selected by ODA after discussions with partners and a review of local information and water quality data, when available. SIAs receive focused outreach and education to address

priority water quality concerns. Landowners are notified of compliance issues such as livestock in waterways, lack of vegetated riparian areas, or improper mud/manure management. They are then encouraged to voluntarily address these issues by working with their local SWCD and/or watershed council. If, after this process, issues persist, ODA may use enforcement to obtain compliance. In Columbia County the Nehalem/Birkenfeld area has been designated as a SIA. This last year the Columbia SWCD and the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council worked together on two riparian projects to improve water quality in the Nehalem River. On one property fencing was installed to ensure exclusion of livestock from



CRYC installing a fence to keep livestock out of the river. This is another important measure in improving water quality.

the river. On another property plantings were performed to improve the riparian area, reduce erosion, and promote habitat development. These projects are great opportunities to improve conditions for the landowners, the environment, and the community as a whole.



Anniversary 70th Celebration

On October 8, 2016 the Columbia SWCD celebrated its 70th Anniversary at the Columbia County Fairgrounds Pavilion with fabulous food, friends, and fundraising. Attendees included partners, contractors, engineers, and members of the community. Guests were treated to a night of fine dining with dinner and drinks provided by locally renowned Columbia County Brewing and gourmet appetizers supplied by Christy Aucker. The evening featured a silent auction with items ranging from a

night at the Mark Spencer Hotel to Beaver football tickets to beautiful gift baskets. There was also a live auction that included such prizes as a weekend getaway at the coast, a hand-carved wooden bench donated by the Clatskanie High School forestry program, and a group paddling tour on Scappoose Bay. The SWCD raised over \$5,000 to support natural resource technical education programs in Columbia County. The evening culminated with the SWCD's District Manager presenting beautiful custom carved

plaques to the NRCS and all three local watershed councils to commemorate decades of partnering for conservation. Live music and a slideshow capturing moments throughout the SWCD's history played in the background throughout the evening. It was a night to reminisce about the past, revel in the present, and reflect on the future.

Thank you to all those who donated or attended the celebration for making it a success and helping us to commemorate 70 years of service in Columbia County.



ABOVE: Kari Hollander, Columbia SWCD District Manager, handed out custom plaques to NRCS and all three local watershed councils.

LEFT: Guests enjoy catching up.



Celebrating **Margaret Magruder:** *from Coordinator to Commissioner*



Margaret Magruder was the Council Coordinator for the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council for over 2 decades. Over this time, we at the Columbia SWCD have developed strong professional and personal bonds with her, counting her as not just a close partner, but also as a good friend. We are saddened by her departure from the watershed council, but look forward to seeing what great things she will accomplish in her new position as County Commissioner. If anyone knows how to fight for Columbia County, it's our dear friend, Margaret.

Congratulations, Commissioner!







Thank You

Thank you to our Partners and many local contractors that we have had the pleasure of working with this year.

*Natural Resources
Conservation Service*

*Lower Columbia River
Watershed Council*

*Scappoose Bay
Watershed Council*

*Upper Nehalem
Watershed Council*

*Lower Columbia Estuary
Partnership*

*Oregon Department
of Forestry*

*Oregon Department
of Fish and Wildlife*

*Oregon Department
of Agriculture*

*Department of
Environmental Quality*

*Oregon Watershed
Enhancement Board*

Army Corps. of Engineers

Department of State Lands

*Federal Emergency
Management Agency*

*Bureau of Land
Management*

*National Marine Fisheries
Service*

*Northwest Oregon
Restoration Partnership*

City of Scappoose

City of Rainier

City of Clatskanie

*Columbia County Roads
Department*

*Columbia County Land
Development Services*

*Columbia County
Fairgrounds*

Columbia River Youth Corps.

Rainier School District #13

*St. Helens School
District #502*

*Clatskanie School
District #6*

*Vernonia School
District #47J*

Lower Columbia Engineering

Kynsi Construction

Aquatic Contracting LLC

Sound Native Plants

Biohabitats LLC

Jobin Construction LLC

Aptum Inc.

*Herrera Environmental
Consulting*

Tapani Inc.

Cascade GIS & Consulting

*SWCA Environmental
Consultants*